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SHAKSPERIAN CRITICISM:

TEXTUAL AND LITERARY,

FROM DRYDEN TO THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

ERNEST WALDER, B.A.

FOLCROFT LIBRARY EDITIONS / 1971

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BY

ERNEST WALDER, B.A.

(Late Scholar of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge).

BEING THE ESSAY WHICH OBTAINED THE HARNESS PRIZE, 1895.

Bradford:
THOMAS BREAR & CO. LIMITED,
17 & 19, KIRKGATE,
1895.

PREFACE.

In the following Essay I have first endeavoured to give a brief sketch of the history of the Criticism of the age; and secondly to deal with each of the more celebrated critics separately.

I have illustrated the earlier editors more fully than the later, for it seemed that they needed it more. I have been influenced in writing it by the following books and articles:—

Dr. Ward's *Dramatic History* vol. i. on Shakspere's Critics.

Knight's *History of Opinion on Shakspere's Plays.*

Westminister Review, vol. xviii., article by G. H. Lewes.

Dr. Dowden's *Introduction to Shakspere.*

Dr. Dowden's *Shakspere: His Mind and Art.*

Preface to *Cambridge Shakspere.*

Preface to *Walker's Conjectures.*

Preface to *Grant White's Edition.*

Article in *Times* December 26th, 1860.

Drake's *Memorials of Shakspere.*

Hallam's *Middle Ages.*

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I.—Literary Criticism of Shakspere from Dryden to the end of the Eighteenth Century.

§1. Creation and Criticism.

§1 POPE in his "Essay on Criticism" has made Criticism the handmaid of the Muses. The allegory is very suggestive. If the critics of the eighteenth century, both literary and textual, had borne it in their minds, they would have learnt to understand Shakspere much sooner and far better than they did. The radical defect of their criticism was that they forgot that creation is necessary before criticism can be applied—that Æschylus, Sophocles and their train existed before Aristotle could form his rules. Genius of the highest order must frame rules for itself: the very idea of genius creating according to fixed rules and maxims is at variance with our idea of the highest genius. One of the more enlightened critics[1]

1 Warton in *Adventurer*.

§1. Creation and Criticism.

observes that these mechanical rules "are often strictly observed by a genius of the lowest order."

Seeing that creation has priority, it will easily be seen that the true critic's function is to analyse and explain the method of genius, rather than to supply it with rules and method.

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

§2. After a great creative period in literature there generally follows a period of decay.[1] Then the nation feeling its own weakness turns to foreign literature for help. This was the state of our literature in the age of Dryden. It had turned to France, and had become entirely enslaved to French influence.

The French drama was built on the rules of Aristotle even more strictly than that of Greece itself. Consequently English dramatic criticism would be vitiated by a most strict observance of "Aristotle's clock."

Two Schools of Shaksperian Criticism: The French School. The Romantic School.

But this cloud had passed away before the end of the eighteenth century. Thus we can distinguish two distinct schools of criticism. The first which shows the influence of French criticism we have named "The French School." There are three

1 Dr. Ward—Eng. Dramatic Literature, Vol. i.

potent fallacies in the criticism of this school which were due to French influence: their accusation of Shakspere, on account of his non-observance of the unities; their condemnation of so-called tragi-comedy, and their clamour for poetical justice.

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

Fallacies of Criticism of French School.

We shall here trace the gradual relinquishment of these errors, also the gradual growth of the appreciation of Shakspere's characters, and of a right and philosophical estimate of his powers.

Rymer's criticism shows the extreme effects of the French influence. It shows a mind of no mean culture "hopelessly crippled by abject reverence for Aristotle." He looked upon Shakspere with Voltaire as an out and out barbarian. Dryden, who was possessed of a mightier genius than his works give him credit for, saw and reverenced the prodigious genius of Shakspere. He seems to have wished that he could excuse his non-observance of the unities, but not to have seen his way to do so.

1. The French School.
1. Thos. Rymer.

2. Dryden.

Gildon and Dennis took up the cudgels against Rymer, but they were both (especially the former) quite incapable of defending Shakspere. The

3. Gildon.

4. Dennis.

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

former had a very cold appreciation of Shakspere's genius, but the admiration of the latter was real and ardent. "He had none to imitate," he writes, "and is himself inimitable."

Yet Dennis was a typical adherent of the French School. He not only would have the three unities observed, but he wished the lines to be regular, and he would have poetical justice done. He altered Coriolanus to suit these ideas of his.

He was of opinion that Shakspere "wanted nothing but time and thought to find out those rules of which he appears so ignorant."

At the opening of the eighteenth century, then there exists no doubt whatever that Shakspere was a great genius. Yet the criterion of criticism is still the same, and Shakspere is excused his defects because he lived in a barbarous and ignorant age.

The result of this was a misconception of Shakspere. Englishmen had never lost their respect for Shakspere. Now the critics come and say that he was ignorant of art. To explain this Shakspere is hailed as a superhuman being, who, taught by "none," could write dramas, and copied

human nature by sheer intuition. His mind was mature without growth; "his best plays" for aught they knew "were written first." Rowe, the writer of this last statement, was also one of this school. But we trace one advance towards a truer standard of criticism when he sees in Shakspere's historical plays an original species, which must be exempted from the blame of not observing the unities.

Here we shall gladly refer to the influence exerted by those two admirable men and excellent writers—Addison and Steele. They have numerous references to Shakspere in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, between 1710-12. There can be little doubt that they exercised a good influence on Shaksperian criticism and opinion, as they did in countless other ways.

Steele[1] in criticising a play, which had just been acted before a suitable audience, and which he describes as a "heap of vice and absurdity," yearns for a Shaksperian drama. "These low gratifications," he remarks, "are only to be amended by people of condition, by encouraging the representation of the noble characters drawn by Shakspere

1 *Tatler* No. 8.

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

and others; from whence it is impossible to return without strong impressions of honour and humanity." This is at once an immortal tribute to Shakspere, and a decisive answer to those who accuse him of writing to please a low taste.

Again in speaking of the "Causes of Tears,"[1] he illustrates Shakspere's art of moving our sympathy ("and the art itself is nature"), "who ever commands our tears."

In another number he has given us an admirable analysis of Hamlet's first soliloquy, which Johnson certainly had in his mind when writing his note on the passage, and perhaps Richardson had read.

And again, in referring to the passage in Hamlet, "some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes," &c., he remarks "This admirable author . . seems to have had his mind thoroughly seasoned with religion . . that would not be suffered by a modern audience."[2] He consequently infers that the age in which he lived "had a much greater sense of virtue than the present"; an inference which is indisputable.[3]

1 No. 68. 2 No. 111.

3 These sentiments are just those of Jeremy Collier in his *Short view of the Stage* (1697-8). He saw the moral tendency of Shakspere's drama and noted the moral character of Falstaff. See Dr. Ward, ad. loc.

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

Addison's admiration of Shakspere is no less intense. He attacked Tate's mutilation of *Lear*[1]; he ranks Shakspere as an example of the first kind of great geniuses,[2] and illustrates Shakspere's pre-eminent art in representing the supernatural.[3]

7. Addison.

Hughes in the *Guardian*, 1713, has a most appreciative article on *Othello*. His excellent taste is shown in the following passage. "It would be easy for a tasteless critic to turn any of the beauties I have mentioned here into ridicule; but such a one would only betray a mechanical judgment, formed out of borrowed rules and common-place reading, and not arising from any true discernment in human nature or its passions."

8. Hughes.

These critics are obviously above the ordinary level, and although they acknowledge the rules of Aristotle, yet their judgment shows them that Shakspere is not to be criticised in accordance with them.

Warton, writing forty years later, belongs to the same class.

9. Warton.

Thus we have illustrated a still further develop-

1 *Spectator* No. 40. 2 No. 160. 3 No. 419.

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

ment. It is recognised by some few of the most judicious critics, that all Shakspere's plays (not only the historical ones) cannot be adequately criticised by Artistotle's canon.

ii. The Romantic School.

It remained now simply for Johnson to give a set proof of this opinion. This he did; and by virtue of this he may fairly be regarded as opening a new school of criticism. For want of a better term we have called this "The Romantic School."

1. Johnson.

But Johnson also showed that Shakspere could not have knowledge by nature; that he was a man like those he drew.

2. Mrs. Lennox *Shakspere Illustrated*, 1753-4.

Shakspere's position has now become much clearer. A book, like Mrs. Lennox's[1] *Shakspere Illustrated*, shows that he has begun to be studied with reference to his originals.

3. Dr. Farmer's *Essay on Learning of Shakspere*, 1767.

Dr. Farmer's *Essay on the Learning of Shakspere* was very celebrated, and is a work of minute research. He has undoubtedly proved that Shakspere, when he wished to consult a classic, referred to a translation. But we cannot help thinking that it was a waste of time and trouble

1 Gottsched refers to Mrs. Lennox in his controversy with Lessing on Shakspere. Doch hat sich in neuren Zeiten eine Frau Lennox gefunden, die Vielen seiner berühmtesten Stücken die Fehler gewiesen hat!

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

to conduct an elaborate research simply to prove this. The deduction which Farmer draws from this, that Shakspere knew no classics, is absurdly illogical. It was the most natural thing in the world that Shakspere should go to a translation, when he could; for what would it have benefitted *him* to go to the original?

Yet nothing is more certain than that there were many still, who did not understand Shakspere.

Johnson himself demanded poetical justice, and was by no means just to Shakspere in all respects.

4. Goldsmith.

Goldsmith was still more in the dark.

It is by no means easy to account for the criticism of this eloquent writer. He is altogether dissatisfied with the stage of the day. "What must be done?" he asks; "Only sit down contented, cry up all that comes before us, and admire even the absurdities of Shakspere."[1]

Yet he knows he is uttering an opinion which is not universal, and so he apologises. "Let the reader suspend his censure; I admire the beauties of this great father of the stage as much as they deserve, but could wish for the honour of our

1 In Citizen of the World, ch. xi., *Stage*.

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

country and for his honour too, that many of his scenes were forgotten."

We judge from this that he was not very well acquainted with Shakspere, but had seen one or two plays acted, and his prudish tastes were offended by some of the more vulgar scenes and jokes.

His strange misunderstanding of Shakspere's Art.

He speaks of the "forced humour, fetched conceit, and unnatural hyperbole which have been ascribed to Shakspere." But the following passage will still further explain his disgust. "What strange vamped comedies, farcical tragedies, or what shall I call them, speaking pantomimes have we not seen of late! No matter what the play may be, it is the actor who draws the audience. He throws life into all; all are in spirits and merry; in at one door and out at another; the spectator in a fool's paradise knows not what all this means, till the last act concludes in matrimony."

This last sentence and the allusion to the acting shows us that his disgust is not roused solely by Shakspere. He has evidently been to see some of the alterations of Shakspere; and this is borne out by his reference later to a prologue. But he

also disparages the *acting*. Now we have abundant evidence that the acting of Shakspere on the eighteenth century stage (with all due deference to Garrick, for his immense services to Shakspere) was *vulgar*. Fielding, when he makes Tom Jones take Partridge to see Hamlet, makes the latter give his preference to the actor who played the king, because he spoke all his words distinctly, half as loud again as the other. He thinks nothing of Garrick because he only did what he would have done himself.

Fielding wishes to compliment Garrick on his truth to nature. But, as has been well asked, "truth to what nature?"[1] To vulgar nature. Garrick's Hamlet "was terrified at the sight of a ghost; not as the sceptical, speculative Hamlet of Shakspere, but as the vulgar clown would be terrified at such a sight; his knees knocking together, his eyeballs starting, his frame trembling."

Another piece of evidence may here be produced from Morgann's Essay. He complains of the way in which the actors represent Falstaff's fictitious death at the Battle of Shrewsbury. They represent

1 See G. H. Lewes in *Westminster Review*, Vol. xliii.

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§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

it in such a way that it bears the "external marks of cowardice." "The painful comedian lies spread out on his belly, and not only covers himself all over with his robe as with a shell, but forms a kind of Tortoise-back by I know not what stuffing or contrivance; in addition to which, he alternately lifts up and depresses and dodges his head, looks to the one side and to the other, so much with the piteous aspect of that animal, that one would not be sorry to see the ambitious imitator calipashed in his robe and served up for the entertainment of the gallery." With this evidence, together with the fact that no doubt some of the plays he saw were mutilated, some, at any rate, of Goldsmith's dislike for Shakspere may be explained away. Yet, in spite of this, he cannot have had anything like a full appreciation of Shakspere.

Two Styles of Criticism in Romantic School: i. Canting. ii. Philosophical

This Romantic School splits up into two sections: the first consists of writers who wrote because it was the fashion to write, without any real idea of Shakspere's excellence; and the second illustrates the rise of that philosophical school of criticism which has its chief representative in Coleridge.

Some of Mrs. Montagu's criticism must certainly

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

be relegated to the first class. This will not perhaps be an unsuitable place to say a word about her, as an opponent of Voltaire.

Voltaire's criticisms on Shakspere roused some very animated replies. But these critics, who are so vindictive with Voltaire, forget that Rymer was a fellow-countryman of Shakspere's. Now Voltaire's criticisms are infinitely more appreciative and less insulting than Rymer's. He speaks of Shakspere as "le Corneille de Londres, grand fou d'ailleurs, et resemblant plus à Gilles qu'à Corneille; *mais il a des morceaux admirables.*" Almost all his criticism is qualified like the above. Voltaire was aware that he was speaking of a man of prodigious genius.

Voltaire and Mrs. Montagu.

"His genius is fine," he writes to Horace Walpole, "but uncultivated, no regularity, no bienséance, no art, but mingling vulgarity with grandeur, buffonery with sublimity, he is the Chaos of Tragedy in which there are a hundred gleams of light."

It was not till after *Julius Cæsar* had been translated and acted with great success in Paris, that Voltaire in his desperate rage wrote to the

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

Academy calling Shakspere "a drunken savage," "a miserable ape"; yet even these letters have appreciative criticisms. Mrs. Montagu, undoubtedly, has the best of the controversy: yet she quite ignores the fact that Voltaire was prejudiced, more so than Rymer; and that the actual praise which he gives to Shakspere is more than could reasonably be expected.

Maurice Morgann's *Essay on Falstaff*, 1777.

Morgann's *Essay on Falstaff* is a very novel piece of criticism. He has, we think, proved that Falstaff was not a *constitutional* coward. His argument is based on a very important and advanced view, that Shakspere gives *impressions* of his characters, without actually showing all the features by *action*. His general criticism is indeed a very important contribution to the criticism of the time and shows a great advance in the appreciation of Shakspere's characters. In fact, he endeavours to show that Shakspere was an organic artist. "Those characters in Shakspere, which are seen only in part, are yet capable of being unfolded and understood in the whole; every part being, in fact, relative, and inferring all the rest." He had a very ardent admiration for Shakspere; and with

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

Richardson shows the beginning of the philosophical criticism of Shakspere. His eulogy of Shakspere is so just and exact that I shall quote part of it "Is a character to be shown in progressive change, and the events of years comprised within an hour; with what a magic hand does he prepare and scatter his spells! The Understanding must, in the first place, be subdued; and lo! how the rooted prejudices of the child spring up to confound the man. The weird sisters rise and order is extinguished. The laws of nature give way, and leave nothing in our minds but wildness and horror. No pause is allowed us for reflection: horrid sentiment, furious guilt and compunction, air-drawn daggers, murders, ghosts and enchantment, shake and possess us wholly."

This philosophic movement in Shaksperian criticism was undoubtedly brought about by the wider critical movement of which Locke, Berkeley, and Hume are exponents.

Davies' *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 1784.

In the three volumes of Davies' *Dramatic Miscellanies* we have not found one piece of criticism worth recording. Though in justice to him it must be said that his remarks are chiefly

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

on the actors of Shakspere.

Dibdin's *History of the Stage*, though it has some judicious remarks on Shakspere, consists chiefly of criticism of the first-class mentioned above, and is full of wrong dates.

Dibdin's *History of the Stage*, 1796.

Plumptre's *Observations on Hamlet*, 1795.

Mr. Jas. Plumptre, M.A., thus describes the origin of his "Observations on Hamlet, being an attempt to prove that Shakspere designed it as an indirect censure on Mary Queen of Scots:" "This 'vast garden of criticism' (of Shakspere) still puts forth its flowers and its weeds, and invites the attention of the labourer and the florist. A solitary wanderer in casually passing through this delightful spot, has accidentally discovered a flower, which appears hitherto to have escaped the notice of its more studious admirers."

Did Mr. Plumptre never consider the pathetic possibility of his flower being a weed?

Later Periodical Criticism:
i. Mackenzie.
ii. Craig.
iii. Cumberland.

There are three periodical essayists to notice in conclusion: Mackenzie, Craig, and Cumberland. The first two show unmistakable influence of Richardson; though there are many points showing the philosophical grounding of the critics. Cumberland has two very apt comparisons, one

between Shakspere and Æschylus, showing how both may be called (in a limited sense) Fathers of Tragedy, how the former excels in fancy and imagination and in his consummate knowledge of human nature shown in his method of characterization; and the latter in preserving a correct and sublime diction. The other between Macbeth and Richard, showing how the former sins through temptation, the latter from deliberation.

§2. History of Eighteenth Century Criticism.

§3. Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* has been called "the first piece of good modern English prose on which our literature can pride itself." If this be so, it is indeed a fitting work to contain the first piece of good Shaksperian criticism in English prose. But it is not only the first, it is perhaps the most reverent and ardent. Such epithets as "divine" and "incomparable," which he applies to him more than once in his writings, are a proof of his veneration; and happy, indeed, is the critic, who is in such a case, that he can say of his author "I love him." Yet it will at once be asked, 'How could Dryden, possessing such

§3. The French School.
i. John Dryden.

Dryden: *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, written 1665; Preface to *Tempest*, acted 1667; *Of Heroic Plays*, 1672; Defence of Epilogue to *Conquest of Granada*, 1672; *Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*, 1679; Preface to *All for Love* and *Troilus and Cressida*.

§3. The French School.

reverence and admiration for Shakspere, presume to alter his works?" The question is a very pertinent one; and the answer though not quite obvious, is none the less decisive. There is ample proof, as we shall hope to show, that Dryden understood Shakspere far better than the generality of critics of last century. He appreciated some of the peculiar excellencies of his genius which were not generally recognised till over a century after he wrote. But he knew the taste of the age in which he lived. He was clear-sighted enough to see that though the age held Shakspere in dim, far-off reverence, yet Shakspere, pure and simple, would not please its taste. Consequently, he altered his plays to suit the taste of the people, and to obtain theatrical success. He knew that Shakspere's *name* would excite attention, but he also knew that Shakspere's *plays* undiluted, would not be a success on the stage, He, therefore, took a play of Shakspere, altered it so that it would please the people; and so as not to offend their own vague idea of his greatness, he justified his alteration by explaining that Shakspere's faults were due to the ignorance of the age in which he lived, and

flattered the people, in addition, by telling them that theirs was an age of refinement. That Dryden thought, in his own mind, that he was improving Shakspere by his alteration is an hypothesis untenable by any one who has read his criticisms. To these we shall now turn. §3. The French School.

In his general estimate of Shakspere, Dryden is very just. "He was the man," he tells us, "who of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul." He recognised the "myriad-mindedness" of Shakspere, and he also felt the true power of his genius. "When he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too." i. Philosophical Criticism.

He seems to have estimated correctly the difference between Jonson and Shakspere, when he describes the former as "the more correct poet," and the latter as "the greater wit"—*i.e.*, Jonson knew his Aristotle, but Shakspere was the greater genius. He pointed out that Fletcher had imitated Shakspere; and he describes him as a "limb of Shakspere," pointing out that the latter described friendship better, the former love. We cannot let this pass undisputed. Love is a complex emotion

§3. The French School.

made up of good and bad elements. In Shakspere's depicture of love, the good and noble elements predominate; in Fletcher's, the bad. Indeed the pure chivalry of love can find no better representation than Shakspere's. Dryden, in common with almost all critics, was struck by the variety and distinction of Shakspere's characters. But he had a philosophical insight into Shakspere's method of drawing character, which was denied to almost all the eighteenth century critics. "A character," he justly says, "cannot be supposed to consist of one particular virtue or vice or passion only." Ben Jonson drew characters as if they could. Shakspere "looked inwards and found nature there." He did not take a virtue or vice and construct the man: he took the man and let his virtues and vices appear naturally. Thus "Falstaff is a liar, a coward" (unless Morgann is right) "a glutton and a buffoon." Dryden admires the inventive genius which produced a Caliban, "begotten by an incubus on a witch," with a "character which will suit him both by his father's and mother's side; he has all the discontents and malice of a witch and of a devil, besides a con-

venient proportion of the seven deadly sins; gluttony, sloth, and lust are manifest." §3. The French School.

He expresses a doubt as to the defensibility of portraying such a character in a drama. We can, at any rate, say that it is quite as defensible as portraying the supernatural at all. Moreover, Dryden did not see the allegorical character of Caliban (and to us some allegory seems certainly implied). But the radical defect of Dryden's criticism is the same as that of the criticism of the age. And this was due to French influence. ii. Technical Criticism.

This age required a drama to be founded on the three unities, propounded by Aristotle, and followed by the French drama. Yet, in this respect, Dryden himself was really beyond his age. In the character of Neander, he shows that the drama may gain much by not following the unities of time and place. He denounces all the historical plays for breaking all three unities. This one can quite understand, but it is not so easy to account for his criticism on *Pericles*, *Winter's Tale*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Measure for Measure*, unless we charitably suppose with Sir Walter Scott, that Dryden was not very well acquainted with them. 1. Plots or Fable

§3. The French School.

2. Rhetoric. (a) Expression.

Another point of technical criticism discussed by Dryden is the language and expression of Shakspere. It is not surprising, especially when we consider that the Folios and Quartos were the only editions he could use, to find him criticising rather severely the license used by Shakspere in his language. He complains of the obscurity of many of his expressions; and describes Macbeth's speeches (certainly unjustly) as bombast Yet he admits in true candour that if "Shakspere were stripped of all the bombast in his passions and dressed in the most vulgar words, we should find the beauties of his thoughts remaining."

(b) Rhyme.

Lastly, as regards rhyme, we know Dryden was a staunch defender thereof. He says, "we thought that because Shakspere and Fletcher described passion excellently without rhyme, therefore rhyme was not capable of describing it." He argues that Shakspere with his supreme genius wrote excellent tragedies *in spite of* his disuse of rhyme. And, indeed, though we may applaud Shakspere's mature choice as the more suitable, yet we may well doubt whether Dryden is not right in maintaining that rhyme lends a great attraction even to a

§3 The French School.

serious play—at least in the judgment of an average audience.

ii. Thomas Rymer.

Dr. Ward has justly remarked "the nadir of Shaksperian criticism in this or any other age was reached by Thomas Rymer, the author of the *Short View of Tragedy*.[1]

A greater contrast than that between Dryden and Rymer, in the spirit in which they wrote, cannot be imagined. If the reverence of Dryden approaches almost to worship, the flippancy of Rymer is next door to profanation. Whatever may have been the religion of the historiographer royal he profanes them all, Christian and Pagan, in the course of his remarks on *Othello* and *Julius Cæsar;* and indeed to judge from this work he has none at all unless it be that of the horse and mastiff to whose neighing and growling he attributes "more humanity than to many of the tragical flights of Shakspere." Yet we agree with Dr. Ward that it is by no means just "to rate Rymer as a critic so miserably low" as Macaulay has done. He was a man of scholarship and good sense. His criticisms on some of the

1 *Plays of last age considered*, 1664. *Short view of Tragedy*, 1693.

§ 3. The French School.

ancient tragedians and on our own Chaucer are very far from being absurd; which his criticisms on Shakspere certainly are.

i. Technical Criticism.

1. Plots.

Absurdity commonly springs from ignorance or misapprehension. Now whatever may have been Rymer's accomplishments in other respects, it is certain that he no more understood Shakspere's art, than a boy of ten. The chief reason for this was his "abject reverence" for Aristotle. His critical powers were so overcome by his regard for the three unities, that as regards Shakspere they are "in their infancy again." But there are other more minute reasons to account for his absurdities. As regards the unity of time, he criticises Shakspere as if the latter had professed to follow it. Thus in his criticism of the third Act of *Othello*, he argues as if Shakspere meant it only to occupy a day; and of course finds many things unnatural.

He has also a comment on Shakspere's infringement of the rule for unity of place. Thus when, in the second act, Shakspere transports us from Venice to Cyprus, "In the days that the Old Testament was acted in Clerkenwell, says this Aristotelian "by the Parish Clerks of London, the

Israelites might pass through the Red Sea; but alas! at this time we have no Moses to bid the waters make way and to usher us along." His criticism of the action of the fable is equally short-sighted and still more flippant. §3. The French School.

He gives the moral of the fable thus:

"Firstly. This may be a caution to all maidens of quality how, without their parents' consent, they run away with black-a-moors.

"Secondly. This may be a warning to all good wives, that they look well to their linen.

"Thirdly. This may be a lesson to husbands, that before their jealousy be tragical, the proofs may be mathematical."

This illustrates the spirit in which Rymer wrote; but he evidently had no conception of the deep spiritual unity in the action of the fable; which though wider than that propounded by Aristotle is, none the less, unity. He is totally wrong, and only shows his want of psychological insight, when he argues that the "Handkerchief trifle" is the only motive for Othello's jealousy.

But it is this want of insight which in his philosophical criticism leads him to commit far

§3. The French School

more serious errors. His defects in technical criticism are in great measure due to the age in which he lived, but the defects which follow are to be laid to the charge of Mr. Rymer's mind. Although he fancies he is criticising Shakspere's characters, he is in reality criticising human nature in general.

ii. His Philosophical Criticism.

In the first place he is guilty of bad logic. He argues that because most soldiers are not like Iago, therefore there never was a soldier like him. "He is no black-a-moor soldier, so we may be sure he should be like other soldiers of our acquaintance; yet never in tragedy, nor in comedy, nor in nature was a soldier with his character." Never was a critic so assured in his bad logic. We are not aware that the historiographer royal enlisted as a soldier as well as tragic poet, but he seems to have a remarkably minute knowledge of them, and a great bias in their favour, to think that a soldier cannot be as bad as any other mortal, even a critic.

But his ethical code is wrong too. It is not only as a soldier that he denounces the character of Iago, but as a man. "Can it be any diversion,"

he asks, "to see a rogue beyond what the devil ever finished?" History will furnish him with only too many such perfections of devilry. §3. The French School.

Again, in his criticism of Desdemona, we notice that he is not really attacking Shakspere, but Virtue. When Desdemona says,

"O good Iago, what shall I do to win my lord again?"

we take this to bespeak a gentle, loving woman. Rymer remarks, "No woman bred out of a pig-stye could talk so meanly." The only way to explain this strange dictum is to suppose that Rymer's ideas of virtue were somewhat confused.

Indeed we shortly get his ideas of virtue. When he is speaking of Desdemona's sad end, he asks "If this be our end, what boots it to be virtuous?" We believe that there are many who stumble in Shakspere (and life too) in a similar way. They come to Shakspere to see virtue rewarded and vice punished. They are virtuous because it is the best policy. But they are utterly disappointed. There is no material reward for virtue in Shakspere any more than in the life of the world. If we would see its reward we must climb "higher than the sphery chime" Such a thing as virtue for its own

§3. The French School.

sake does not seem to have been dreamt of in Mr. Rymer's philosophy. And yet, it cannot be said that wrong is triumphant; in spite of the wiles of the wicked, Othello dies kissing those lips which are purer than ever to him now, and which will be pure for ever "where the wicked cease from troubling."

In conclusion, we may notice that he admits that Shakspere has given us in Brutus a character true to history: though he accuses him of inconsistency, which he proves (as is his general procedure) by cutting out a piece from its context.

We come now to treat of the literary criticism produced by the eighteenth century editors of Shakspere.

iii. Nicholas Rowe.

Rowe's *Preface*[1] has, in our opinion, been very undeservedly neglected. Warburton dismissed it as common-place trash (but from him this is not very surprising), and we have not seen full notice of it anywhere. It is perfectly true that there is not much depth in his criticisms; yet he treats of Shakspere in a most sympathetic spirit, which can be said of only very few of the eighteenth century critics.

He falls into the error of holding Shakspere to be a kind of supernatural genius; who sprang up into full maturity all at once. Thus he says, "perhaps we are not to look for his beginnings, like those of other authors, among his least perfect writings; art had so little and nature so large a share in what he did that for aught I know, the performances of his youth, as they were the most vigorous, and had the most fire and strength of imagination in them, were the best." §3. The French School.

It is, no doubt, owing to this notion that Rowe scarcely blames him at all for disregarding the three unities. He is quite right in excusing Shakspere for his non-observance of hard and fast rules of art, by the fact that he was a great genius, for it is genius which first creates materials from which rules are formed; but the above mistaken notion quite overlooks the great debt which Shakspere owed to his predecessors. But he also finds an excuse for him in the ignorance of the age. "We are to consider him," he writes, "as a man that lived in a state of universal license and ignorance: there was no established judge, but every one took the liberty to write according to the dictates of his i. Technical Criticisms. 1. Plots.

§3. The French School.

own fancy."

Yet, of course, he still belongs to the French School, because he thinks Shakspere *ought* strictly to have written according to Aristotle's rules, though he has abundant excellencies to outweigh this defect.

He has certainly formed a juster estimate of Shakspere's historical plays than Dryden did. He points out that Shakspere's design seems most commonly to have been rather to describe some great men in the several fortunes and accidents of their lives than to take any single great action and form his work solely upon that.

And yet there is a unity of action in the historical plays which Rowe did not see; Shakspere took some weakness or strength in the characters of the kings, and worked with this as his central idea.

ii. Philosophical Criticism.

"The way of tragi-comedy," he remarks, "was the common mistake of the age," yet he says that the generality of the audiences of the time were better pleased with it than with an exact tragedy. Rymer had already noticed the use of the comic parts in *Othello*, viz., to relieve the oppression of the tragic scenes; but Rowe does not rate him

for it like his predecessor. He is certainly before the times when he expresses a doubt as to whether Shakspere was most excellent in tragedy or comedy. Pope, and others after him, without hesitation, set him down as superior in comedy. § 5. The French School.

Rowe has also acutely pointed out how nearly some of Shakspere's comedies border on tragedies. Thus he notes the tragic intensity of Shylock. He has also touched on the character of Falstaff. But (in common with many modern critics) he does not appreciate it quite rightly. He complains of the attractiveness of a character given to lying, cowardice, and vain-glory; and yet he complains of Henry's "scurvy treatment of him after he comes to the crown." This scurvy treatment is, of course, intended by the poet to counteract the attractiveness of the character. There is an obvious moral implied in Henry's rebuke:

> "I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers!
> How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!"

We cannot leave Rowe without admiring the kindly spirit in which his *Preface* is written, which contained just what was wanted to give the people some idea of Shakspere's writings.

§3. The French School.

iv. Alexander Pope.

Pope's *Preface*,[1] unlike Rowe's, has been much admired and not unjustly. Its style is certainly admirable.

Yet we must record our conviction that Rowe had a much better conception of Shakspere's dramatic art than Pope. This was in a way natural; for Rowe himself was a dramatist of no mean rank, and Pope's genius was of an entirely different stamp from Shakspere's. And, indeed, we think Pope was indebted to Rowe in some measure for his material; at any rate, for the idea of exculpating Shakspere from the charge of infringing the three unities, when he writes: "To judge of Shakspere by Aristotle's rules is like trying a man by the laws of one country, who acted under those of another." However this may be, it seems to us unmistakable that he was influenced by Dryden, both in style and sentiment. His opening statement (so often quoted in the last century) bears the stamp of a similar one in Dryden. His general remarks on Shakspere's characters are very similar; and his remark "as Shakspere has certainly written better so he has

Influence of Rowe

Influence of Dryden.

[1] 1725.

perhaps written worse than any other" has a corresponding one in Dryden. §3. The French School.

This latter statement is, we think, very exaggerated; and we shall now examine it together with the causes of these defects as given by Pope.

The first cause which he gives is that Shakspere wrote "solely to hit the taste of humour that then prevailed." This is a view which we strongly contest.

A comparison between Shakspere's plays and those of his successors—Fletcher, Webster and Middleton furnishes us at once with a refutation. We are far from maintaining that Shakspere wrote with a moral purpose of giving instruction. But these two views form two extremes; and there are intermediate possibilities. Shakspere did not pick out a subject which would suit the low taste of the audience; he chose that which best suited his genius. And this is the method followed by all the greatest geniuses. It is your average stage-caterer who rakes up a subject which will take, and then sees what he can make of it. It is quite true that there are some passages which *we* may call low; but to say that Shakspere "wrote solely

§3. The French School.

to hit the taste" is the reverse of the truth. Turning to the defects enumerated by Pope, it is a strange perversion of truth to say that the author of Hamlet, Othello, Horatio, Cordelia, Desdemona, and Imogen has his scénes among "tradesmen and mechanics." Shakspere's universal genius, of course, included these among his characters, but the majority of his scenes are among highly refined and intellectual characters. That Steele could write in the year when Rowe's edition of Shakspere came out, that it was impossible to return from representations of Shakspere "without strong impressions of honour and humanity" is a sufficient proof that Shakspere wrote to please no low taste.

When Pope speaks of the Shaksperian tragedy as containing "the most strange and unexpected and consequently most unnatural events and incidents" he takes us back in thought to Rymer; and when he refers to the "buffoonery, vile ribaldry and unmannerly jests of fools and clowns" we can quite imagine that he is quoting the same critic.

It is in accordance with these ideas that in his edition Pope wishes to omit, and actually does

omit what he is pleased to call "low scenes." Thus the dialogue between Speed and Launce he characterises as such, and would even omit it as an interpolation. Speed and Launce have a perfect right to be represented in the drama, and if Pope wishes to omit Shakspere's dialogue, what would he have them to converse about? Would he make them speak in regular metre on virtue or philosophise on man's estate? §3. The French School.

Pope would evidently gather grapes off thorns, and because the thorns cannot supply him, he blames Shakspere.

Lastly, Pope accounts for the improvement noticeable in the productions of his later years by the fact that at first he had to write to please a low audience; but afterwards he gained the patronage of the court and consequently wrote better.

This apology for psychology is almost as good as the ethics of his *Essay on Man*! As if the patronage of all the courts in Europe could account for the difference between *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*! The explanation of this difference is not to be found in any external change of circumstances, it is emphatically in-

§3. The French School.

ternal and psychological. It was the growth of Shakspere's own mind within that wrought the change.

From our remarks on Pope's *Preface* it will, we hope, be evident that Johnson's praise is most extravagant. We do not wish to say a word against the style, that deserves all the praise. The arrangement is perfect; his happy mode of expression, as when he speaks of Shakspere as "not so much an imitator as an instrument of nature" is inimitable. But we believe that the admirable composition of the essay has obscured the faults and absurdities which it contains.

v. William Warburton.

Warburton's *Preface*[1] is too full of denunciations of his fellow-editors to admit of much literary criticism. Yet in some of his notes in the edition, though often too far-fetched and ingenious, there is much good criticism, and so I have treated of him here.

He is a hopeless follower of the French School. This is unmistakable from the strange perversity which characterises some of his notes. The excursus he gives on the passages recited by the

1 1747.

player in *Hamlet*, "The rugged Pyrrhus," &c., is an example in point. And the conclusion he comes to with regard to them is that they are from a play of Shakspere's own; "he was desirous, as soon as he had found his strength, of restoring the chasteness and regularity of the ancient stage; and therefore composed this tragedy on the model of the Greek Drama. But this attempt proved fruitless; and the raw unnatural taste, then prevalent, forced him back again into his old Gothic manner." Thus it was that he wrote *Hamlet*, and revenged himself by quoting these passages from his rejected play, and making good remarks about them. A very feeble revenge surely. This is perhaps as absurd a piece of criticism as the last age can produce. §3. The French School.

Again Warburton cannot "abide" the introduction of comic scenes into tragedy—"we, by jumbling tragedy and comedy together, begot in an evil hour, that mongrel species, unknown to nature and antiquity, called Tragi-comedy.

He condemns Rymer's remarks on the character of Iago, though his argument is not quite correct. He sometimes has some very pertinent criticisms

§3. The French School.

on the characters, for example, his observations on the character of Polonius are very acute. His exegetical criticism is as a rule too far fetched, though it is often very ingenious; and he could certainly interpret his author better than the preceding editors, while at the same time it must be admitted that he often "deviates further from his meaning."

vi. Joseph Warton.

Warton has left us some very judicious and helpful criticisms on *Tempest* and *King Lear*. That he belonged to this school is evident from the following statement. The observation of the unity of time is "an excellence which ought always to be aimed at in every well-conducted fable, and for the want of which a variety of the most entertaining incidents can scarcely atone." Yet it is no less certain that he was a most enlightened follower of that school, for he allows that Shakspere's "lively creative imagination; his strokes of nature and passion; and his preservation of the consistency of his characters are of so much importance in the drama, that they amply compensate for his transgressions against the rules of time and place, which, being of a more mechanical nature, are

often strictly observed by a genius of the lowest order." §3. The French School.

He has stated the exact nature of the case. The greatest geniuses are naturally averse to anything "mechanical;" they must roam at their own sweet will. He has another piece of technical criticism, on the plot of *Lear*. He considers that "the plot of Edmund against his brother, distracts the attention and destroys the unity of the fable." It would have been far juster to admire the consummate art by which Shakspere has joined this under-plot with the main one, and made it a link of one golden chain. In introducing this plot Shakspere was not following his original; he has brought it in quite intentionally; and indeed rightly so. For without the plot of Edmund against his brother, Edgar would never have been driven to the mountain hovel; and everyone will admit that he increases the tragic intensity, and therefore draws rather than distracts the attention. And in addition, as has been pointed out, the two plots are similar—in both an infatuated father is blind towards his well-disposed child, and the unnatural offspring, to whom he gives preference, requites

§3. The French School.

him by the destruction of his entire happiness."

In the remarks on the characters, he has given us a very sympathetic description of those of Caliban and Miranda. He shows (like Dryden) how consistent his character is with his origin. But he evidently does not see the moral implied in this character when he says "I always lament that our author has not preserved this fierce and implacable spirit in Caliban to the end of the play,—instead of which he has, I think, injudiciously put into his mouth words that imply repentance and understanding:

> I'll be wise hereafter
> And seek for grace. What a thrice double ass
> Was I, to take this drunkard for a God,
> And worship this dull fool!

Shakspere wished, of course, to bring the villany of Antonio and Sebastian into stronger light, by causing this poor monster to repent.

But Warton has caught the spiritual meaning of Ariel. When Ariel tells Prospero that if he were now to see the sufferings of his brother and his companions, he would pity them, Prospero answers

> Dost think so spirit?
> ANT. Mine would sir, were I human.
> PROSP. And mine shall.

And thus the idea of the whole play that "the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance," is brought to light. §3. The French School.

Warton considers this moral use of Ariel's character "incomparable, and the greatest effort of his art."

He sees the beauty and innocence of Miranda, whom Rymer would have condemned to the pig-sty; and he has traced very accurately the stages in the madness of Lear, pointing out very acutely that when he sees Cordelia he is somewhat restored, but on her death, he relapses, and dies with her on his thoughts.

§4. Johnson's *Preface*[1] is a masterly piece of criticism. It illustrates in a striking way that quality which has so often been attributed to him, "robust common-sense." But it is further characterised by open-hearted honesty. He is honest when he praises Shakspere, and his praise is unaccompanied by "cant;" he is honest when he blames him, and his blame is without insolence. §4. The Romantic School.

i. Samuel Johnson.

And yet his criticism is cold and prosaic. There is nothing of the ardour of Dryden in it; there is

1 1765.

§4. The Romantic School.

nothing of his reverence.

He admired Shakspere as far as his common-sense allowed him, but no further; and of the deeper subtleties, and the stupendous greatness of his dramatic art he had no conception.

Yet he understood Shakspere much better than his predecessors, and entered more into his spirit. Thus he recognised the hand of Shakspere in *Love's Labour's Lost* when the play was generally condemned.

But it is Johnson's great praise as a Shaksperian critic that he refuted once for all, by sturdy common-sense and invincible logic the opinion, held for so long that Shakspere ought to have conformed to the rules of Aristotle concerning the unities of action, time and place.

But before we go further, we want to point out that Johnson in his *Preface* owed a small debt to his friend Dr. Warton.

Warton, as we have seen, paved the way for this refutation—though he did not actually refute the opinion. Again in Johnson's remarks on the treatment of love in the modern drama, and on Shakspere's employment of other passions, he certainly owes

Influence of Warton.

§4. The Romantic School.

something to the following passage. "One of the most remarkable differences betwixt ancient and modern tragedy, arises from the prevailing custom of describing only those distresses that are occasioned by the passion of love; a passion which, from the universality of its dominion, may doubtless justly claim a large share in representations of human life ... . But Shakspere has shown us by his *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Cæsar*, and above all by his *Lear*, that very interesting tragedies may be written that are not founded on gallantry and love." However, it was Johnson who first clearly saw that the three unities or rather those of time and place were purely arbitrary.

i. His Technical Criticism.
1. Plots.

He showed that Shakspere had kept that of action in a way, though not exactly in the way Aristotle determined. But he very decisively showed the absurdity of looking upon the unities of time and place as necessary for a good drama. He points out in the first place that the purpose of this stricture is to make the drama more credible; that the critics who maintain it, declare that it is impossible for a spectator to imagine an action of three months or years to take place in three hours;

§4. The Romantic School.

or that if he sees the first act at Alexandria, it is impossible for him to suppose he sees the next at Rome.

But Johnson replies "it is false that any representation is mistaken for reality." "He that can take the stage at one time for the palace of the Ptolemies, may take it in half-an-hour for the promontory of Actium."

"The truth is that the spectators are always in their senses, and know from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players'"

If it be asked "how then does the drama move, if it is not credited?" Johnson answers "Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind." "We lament the possibility rather than suppose the presence of the evils before us, as a mother weeps over her babe, when she remembers that death may take it from her."

Thus Johnson became the champion of the Romantic Drama.

He is right when he finds fault with some of the plots on account of loose formation, and perhaps

also when he accuses Shakspere of neglecting the latter part of some of the plots. But we must dissent from him when he accounts for this by saying "he shortened the labour to snatch the profit." It is quite possible that in some cases lines have dropped out. The *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is an example of this kind. Though for our part we can quite imagine that Valentine's declaration to Proteus, "all that is mine in Sylvia, I give thee," is simply a generous burst of forgiveness on his part, which was of course not taken literally by any of those who heard it, and consequently called forth no remark from Sylvia.[1]

But Johnson laid bare more than one of the fallacies in eighteenth-century criticism on Shakspere.

He exposed the absurdity of the supposition that Shakspere had his knowledge by intuition—"taught by none.' "The power of nature" he justly remarks "is only the power of using to any certain purpose the materials which diligence procures, or opportunity supplies."

1 For other points of technical criticism, cf. his censure of Shakspere's bombast and quibbles. It is hard to understand in what sense Shakspere "lost the world" on account of the latter.

§4. The Romantic School.

"Shakspere, however favoured by nature, could impart only what he had learned; and as he must increase his ideas, like other mortals, by gradual acquisition, he, like them, grew wiser as he grew older, and could display life better as he knew it more."

The inquiry into Shakspere's knowledge of the ancient languages is as useless as it is hopeless. But it is certain that Shakspere *had* learning in its more liberal sense, and that he had read a great deal of literature in his own language.

His insight into the heart of man was certainly a gift of nature; but his knowledge of the same was due to experience.

Johnson again played his part as champion, when he justified Shakspere's practice of "mixing comic and tragic scenes." He does so by showing (in an admirable passage) that Shakspere's plays are not "in the vigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion, and innumerable modes of combination; and

§4. The Romantic School.

expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine and the mourner burying his friend, in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolic of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design."

It is surprising that, as Johnson's philosophy carried him so far, it did not lead him to justify Shakspere's neglect of so-called poetical justice. But this was too much against his ideas of morality. "He sacrifices virtue to convenience," he complains "and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose." If Johnson had only shuffled off his moralising cloak, and arrayed himself in his critical robes, he would at once have seen that there can be no actual moral *purpose* in the true dramatist.

His purpose is single—to represent life faithfully. We firmly believe that the *tendency* of all the highest art is always moral; and from Shakspere countless lessons can be drawn of a moral nature, yet they are there because they are to be drawn

§4. The Romantic School.

from life too.

Let us take one of the plays which would come under this judgment—*King Lear*. The idea that the poet wrote this play to please is simply preposterous. Does not the fact that Nahum Tate took upon himself to alter it, as it was acted afterwards, prove the very reverse? But he sacrifices virtue to convenience! Convenience in *Lear!* We are bold enough to think that Shakspere found it no convenient task. It is in Tate that convenience reigns paramount.

In his observations on *King Lear* Johnson makes a fatal mistake when he says "Shakspere has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause." He has suffered *Cordelia* to perish, but only that her virtue may shine the brighter; although "the muddy vesture of decay" has left our sight, her virtue remains in our minds imperishable.

When Johnson is in his critical mood he rightly allows that it is Shakspere's *praise* that his drama is the mirror of life, and that "he is the post that holds up to his readers a *faithful* mirror of manners and of life."

§4. The Romantic School.

He was fully aware of the universality of Shakspere's genius. His characters are "the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply and observation will always find." On this score he rightly exculpates Shakspere from the censure of those critics who alleged that some of his characters were not drawn with propriety; for example, in representing the Danish usurper as a drunkard; but "kings love wine" as Johnson shrewdly observes "as well as men." In one sense "Shakspere has no heroes"—if a hero means one who is always victorious and always right. But there certainly is a sense in which Hamlet and Othello are heroes. Is not Hamlet, throwing aside all thoughts of a glorious future, treading under foot his very heart's desire—his love for Ophelia, in order to perform his heaven-sent charge, a hero? This is, we think, more than an average man would have done.

Is not Othello, throwing away his most precious pearl, because he thinks it is a sham and a fraud, to be classed as a hero?

These are sides of their character which cannot be disregarded.

§4. The Romantic School.

Johnson has some very shrewd remarks on different characters in his edition, notably the preliminary observations on Othello, and his note on the character of Polonius. He has also done much to explain the phrases and expressions of our author.[1]

Elizabeth Montagu.

Mrs. Montagu's *Essay*[2] was held in great repute in the last century, and passed through several editions. Dr. Johnson's sneers with regard to it are not very surprising. He would probably have looked upon this effusion of a lady of fashion as an impertinence; more especially if he noticed that she was very much indebted to his *Preface*.

Influenced by Johnson.

Perhaps in her conception of the supreme end of the drama as moral instruction, she is following the bent of her own mind rather than being influenced by that of Johnson. For it is distinctly an effeminate view. But in classing the historical drama as a distinct and original species she is certainly adopting Johnson's idea. Again when she compares Shakspere's moral sentiments with

1 For other points of philosophical criticism, of Johnson's remarks on *Love as a Motive*; and his very unjust censure of the female characters for not being sufficiently refined.

2 1769.

the maxims of Euripides she seems to be under the same influence. 14. The Romantic School.

In the following passage the resemblance is partly verbal. "Our author by following minutely the chronicles of the times has embarassed his dramas with too great a number of persons and events. The hurly-burly of these plays recommended them to a rude illiterate audience, who, as he says, loved a noise of targets."

Though she has her own way of putting things, the ideas here expressed are from Johnson's *Preface*.

But she sometimes further illustrates and developes some of Johnson's views. Thus when she says "Shakspere's *dramatis personæ* are men frail by constitution, hurt by ill habits, faulty and unequal. But they speak with human voices, are actuated by human passions, and are engaged in the common affairs of human life. We are interested in what they do or say, by feeling every moment that they are of the same nature as ourselves," she is illustrating Johnson's dictum that "Shakspere has no heroes; only men," and also adopting some of Johnson's remarks on Shakspere

§4. The Romantic School.

as the poet of nature.

We have already considered this essay as an answer to Voltaire; we have now simply to deal with its criticism on Shakspere. We do not think it is quite just to describe it simply as "A clever answer to Voltaire" as Dr. Ward does,—for the greater part is not directed against Voltaire. He is only directly attacked in the Introduction and Essay on *Julius Cæsar*, and Corneille in her Essay on *Cinna*,—the rest quite merits to rank as independent criticism on Shakspere.

As regards Mrs. Montagu's style in general, we may remark that it is unmistakably feminine. This alone would have been sufficient to condemn it in the eyes of the mighty dictator. And though rendered easy by some sparks of feminine wit, it is decidedly long-winded. Her criticism is, as we should expect, not very profound. Yet the aptness of some of her comparisons between Shakspere and the ancient dramatists bespeaks a mind of considerable culture and acuteness.

i. Technical Criticism.

1. Plots.

Johnson had, as we have seen, satisfactorily answered the adherents of Aristotle. Mrs. Montagu, of course, treats them with contempt.

§4. The Romantic School.

"The pedant who bought at a great price the lamp of a famous philosopher expecting that by its assistance his lucubrations would become equally celebrated, was little more absurd than those poets who suppose their dramas will be excellent if they are regulated by Aristotle's clock."

2. Rhetoric. (a) Use of Blank Verse.

Of the rest of her technical criticism her remarks on the use of blank verse as a vehicle for the drama are certainly the best. In replying to Voltaire's condemnation of it she remarks that "it is perhaps not less happily adapted than the iambic to the dramatic offices. It rises gracefully into the sublime; it can slide happily into the familiar; hasten its career if impelled by vehemence of passion; pause in the hesitation of doubt; appearing lingering and languid in dejection and sorrow; is capable of varying its accent, and adapting its harmony, to the sentiment it should convey, and the passion it would excite, with all the power of musical expression."

A juster and more elegant estimate of the powers of blank verse we have never read.

She joins with Johnson (quite unjustly in our

§4 The Romantic School.

opinion) in condemning some of Macbeth's

(*b*) Bombastic Speeches.

speeches as bombast.

But her criticism reaches its zenith in her observation on "the Præternatural Beings" in Shakspere. She shows a true appreciation of the proper treatment of the supernatural in the drama, by pointing

ii. Philosophical Criticism.

out the two rules to be observed.

First, to bring the supernatural to the level of the natural.

Second, to weave it into the plot so that it helps on the action.

1. Shakspere's treatment of Supernatural.

To obtain the first object "the poet must pay regard to fix it in such scenes, and to display it in such actions as are agreeable to the popular opinion. Witches holding their sabbath, and saluting passengers on the blasted heath; ghosts at the midnight hour, visiting the glimpses of the moon, and whispering a bloody secret, from propriety of place and action derive a credibility very propitious to the scheme of the poet."

Ghost in Hamlet.

She illustrates how Shakspere has helped to naturalise the Ghost in *Hamlet*, by causing him to vanish at cock-crow according to the popular tradition. And she here contrasts the terror and

awe inspired by the Ghost in *Hamlet*, with the cold, deliberate calmness, with which the shade of Darius rises in the *Persae*. The latter is fetched up by libations of wine, milk, honey and oil. "Let the wits" she adds with another display of her wit, "who are so smart on our ghost's disappearing at the cock's crowing, explain why, in reason, a ghost in Persia, or in Greece, should be more fond of milk and honey, than averse in Denmark to the crowing of a cock." §4 The Romantic School.

She shows too with how much greater propriety, Shakspere has made use of the witches, than Aeschylus of the Furies; and she refers to the ungainly monster Caliban as "assisting in bringing things to the proposed end and perfection." 2. Characters.

In her remarks on Falstaff she has well said that the author intended him to be "perfectly witty;" and as he is not given to quibbling so much as others she justly concludes (referring to a passage in Johnson's *Preface*) that "our author was sensible it was but a false kind of wit, which he practiced from the hard necessity of the times: for in that age the professor quibbled in his chair, the judge quibbled on the bench, the prelate

§4 The Romantic School.

quibbled in the pulpit, the statesman quibbled at the council-board; nay, even majesty quibbled on the throne."[1]

iii. William Richardson.

Richardson's style like his criticism is philosophical; consequently before we get to his criticisms on the characters we have to listen to a long philosophical disquisition. Yet we are amply repaid when we get there. Knight is grossly unjust to him, so much so that we should imagine he had read nothing but his essay on the faults of Shakspere.

To this we shall first turn our attention. He takes Shakspere to have been a man of extreme sensibility; and urges that "the greatest blemishes in Shakspere have proceeded from his want of consummate taste." "He felt the powerful effects of beauty; he wrote under the influence of feeling; but was apt to be misled by those maxims, which are often repeated, but ill-understood; which have a foundation in truth, but must be followed with caution." The maxim which Richardson argues led Shakspere astray is "follow nature."

Accounts for Shakspere's Defects.

1 We just notice here that Mrs. Montagu pointed out that in the line of Macbeth, "Time and the hour runs through the roughest day," *Hour*=occasion.

He has mingled tragic and comic scenes. This he has done in following this general maxim without understanding it. But it may well be doubted if Shakspere ever heard or read this maxim; it was Shakspere's own genius that found out the path. Yet it is certainly this general maxim which will in part excuse him.

Richardson admits that "even an English Princess" (and history records as much of Elizabeth) "agreeably to the representation of Shakspere, addressed by a deformed and loathsome lover, may spit in his face, and call him "hedge-hog," but he says "I conceive that the solemn, in dramatical composition, should be kept apart from the ludicrous." We would here remark that in the above case Shakspere does not wish to inspire us with any respect for Anne; and in no case where he wishes to do so has he roused our contempt in that way.

He makes the Danish King a drunkard, but he wishes us to despise him; and Johnson's justification is still undefeated.

Now introducing comic scenes into tragedy is altogether of a different nature to giving bad

§4. The Romantic School.

language or low behaviour to a person of a high and dignified position. With regard to the former Richardson's philosophy did not carry him quite far enough. If he could have had the perusal of Shelley's lines :

> Our sincerest laughter
> With some pain is fraught.

he might have withdrawn his objection.

We agree with him when he says "the poet who excludes from tragedy mean persons and vulgar language because they are dissonant to the general tone of his work, neither *violates* nature, nor trespasses against the great obligation he is under of affording us pleasure." Yet he who *can* introduce them without violating dramatic propriety, gives us a more faithful picture of nature. And this Shakspere has done.

He has made use of the comic scenes, firstly—that the pressure of the tragic scenes may not be too great, and secondly he has combined pathos and humour, for the one springs out of the other. Thus the fool in *Lear* increases the pathos in the end, while he relieves the terrible tragic intensity. He assists in diverting Lear's thoughts from his

troubles, and at the last goes away to die.

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Richardson failed to see that these comic scenes were not introduced at random, but were joined inseparably with the plot.

He notes one or two anachronisms as defects; and with regard to "Aristotle's clock," he remarks that if Shakspere had known of it he might have been more attentive to these unities. "Not that he would have adopted the practice of ancient poets in its fullest extent; for this would have been too opposite to the public taste and too inconsistent with his own luxuriant fancy."

His Analysis of Shakspere's Characters.

But in his studies of the characters there is some admirable criticism. He was indeed the first to interpret Shakspere's method of characterisation. Such characters as Hamlet seemed to be inconsistent; others like Jacques and Falstaff, though appreciated, were yet inexplicable. He has shown by most elaborate philosophical or rather psychological reasoning that as regards the former two, Shakspere's characters *grow* before us. They are not, like Jonson's characters, mere deductions, where you see Macilente, a personified envy, "spouting" nothing but envy from one end of the

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play to the other. But they are like us, "poor fools of nature," moved by many passions, now by envy, the next moment by jealousy. "The soul that now melts with tenderness is instantly frantic with rage." "The countenance now adorned with complacency and beauteous with the smile of content, is in a moment clouded with anxiety, or distorted with envy."

1. Macbeth.

Macbeth's chief passion is ambition. At the beginning it shows itself in his brave prowess in fighting for his king.[1] Upon his success in battle "he rises to unexpected honours: his ambition fostered by imagination, and confirmed by success, becomes immoderate: and his soul, elevated above measure aspires to sovereignty." When "the notion of seizing the crown is suggested to him he is shocked and astonished." His moral faculties forbid it; he is "too full of the milk of human kindness." When Lady Macbeth urges him, he thinks of his treasonous designs "without abhorence." But his moral faculties rise again to condemn him, and there ensues a struggle in

1 Whately in *Remarks on some of the characters*, 1785, attempted to prove that Macbeth's remorse was due to constitutional *timidity*. Kemble answered him in *Macbeth Re-considered*, 1786.

his breast. "Inward contention of mind naturally provokes soliloquy," which Johnson calls bombast. Ambition suggests assassination again, but again "virtue, compassion and other kindred principles oppose." Then taunted by the charge of cowardice he "rushes headlong upon his bane." After this of course comes remorse; he suspects everyone and murders those who are the most suspicious. At length Nemesis comes upon him.

§4. The Romantic School.

Hamlet at the opening of the play is possessed by grief, for the death of a father; aversion to an incestuous uncle, and indignation at the ingratitude and guilt of a mother. These three passions are all illustrated in the first act. His passions find vent in soliloquy; and by giving vent to any passion its violence at the time increases, and Richardson illustrates very acutely how at the end his emotion is much more vehement. But the two chief points that he has discovered in the character of Hamlet are, firstly, that Hamlet dearly loved Ophelia, and that his affection remained unchanged. Secondly, that the reason which Hamlet alleges for refraining from killing the king at his prayers, is not the

a. Hamlet.

§4. The Romantic School.

real reason.

He himself tells us after Ophelia's death:

> I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
> Could not, with all their quantity of love
> Make up my sum.

"Nor ought the pretended rudeness and seeming inconsistency of his behaviour to be at all attributed to inconstancy or an intention to insult."

His sense of virtue, which Richardson makes the leading trait of his character, makes him devote his energies to his father's command. He sees that his love must be cast away; and besides he must appear distracted before her.

But when Hamlet refrains from killing the king the real cause was that "at that instant he was irresolute." "His feelings of tenderness, in a moment when his violent emotions were not excited, overcame his resentment. The reason he alleges is one which he would like to believe, and he therefore gives vent to it, but it is not the real one. "He looks about for a motive; and one better fitted to the opinions of the multitude, and better calculated to lull resentment, is immediately suggested."

§4. The Romantic School.

"His amiable hesitations and reluctant scruples lead him at one time to indecision; and then betray him by the self-condemning consciousness of such apparent imbecility into acts of rash and inconsiderate violence." Hence, the constant postponement of his deed of righteousness.

3. Jacques.

Jacques is a character at first of extreme sensibility; but his sensibility has been shocked by some disappointment; and this produces a mixture of melancholy and misanthrophy. His extreme sensibility is shown in the episode of the deer; his melancholy is seen by his wandering in the forest alone, and in his speech—"A fool! A fool!" and also the famous "All the world's a stage."

Richardson has well pointed out that he is fond of music. He thinks it may be objected that such a melancholy fellow should be. But Shakspere shall be his own interpreter in this instance. He makes one of his characters say "I am never merry when I hear sweet music." Besides the tenor of the song is melancholic. Perhaps his most masterly analysis is that of Sir John Falstaff's character; as Mr. Morgann makes him out to be

4. Falstaff.

§4. The Romantic School.

such a distinguished soldier we must give him his full title.

We altogether go with Richardson when he makes sensuality the strongest principle in the mind of Falstaff. This is proved by Prince Henry's estimate of him (and he has a clear view of Falstaff all along) when he is personating his father the king, for he enlarges on his sensuality. This sensuality causes him to take care of his body and avoid situations of danger. "Thus his cowardice is the result of deliberation rather than the effect of constitution." Yet he is moved by a desire for praise, which leads to "boastful affectation and vain-glory."

He is also deceitful; incapable of gratitude or of friendship and vindictive. How is it that this heap of vices is so attractive? He has estimable qualities of two kinds, the social, the intellectual.

His social qualities are joviality and good humour. They cannot be accounted virtuous in themselves, and in him they are the result of his sensuality—his moral indifference. He cannot bear the retorts of Henry which suggest harsh truths.

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His intellectual qualities are wit and humour of course. Richardson analyses his wit and humour with admirable clearness, and notices other qualities such as discernment of character. The quality which Richardson names "the address with which he defies detection and extricates himself out of a difficulty" should, I think, come under wit and humour.

Richardson has well seen the moral implied in Henry's rebuke at the last; and he further points out that Falstaff cannot act according to Henry's advice, he is totally incorrigible.

"Lear, violent and impetuous, but yet affectionate, from his misfortunes derives improvement. "Macbeth originally a man of feeling, is capable of remorse. And the understanding of Richard, rugged and insensible though he be, betrays his heart to the assault of conscience. But the mean sensualist, incapable of honourable and worthy thoughts, is irretrievably lost; totally and for ever depraved. An important and awful lesson!"

We believe the picture is as dismal as Richardson has drawn it.

§4. The Romantic School.

5. Lear.

Lear is at first the man of mere sensibility; hence he is guided by impetuous impulse, and thus the improbability of his conduct at the outset is explained. "He is not only extravagant in his love; he is no less outrageous in his displeasure."

6. Richard III.

Richard III.'s character is an instance of "great intellectual ability employed for inhuman and

7. Timon.

perfidious purposes. Timon is the man who being liberal at first, from love of distinction, is met by ingratitude and becomes misanthropic.

Female Characters.

Richardson has not omitted to speak of Shakspere's exquisite female characters.

Love is the chief passion in Imogen's mind; Miranda has simplicity and gentleness of disposition; Isabella is amiable and affectionate, and of considerable intellectual ability. Vivacity and wit are the chief qualities of Beatrice. Portia is of gentle disposition, spirited and lively. Cordelia is a fine example of exquisite sensibility, governed by reason, and guided by a sense of propriety.

We may add Virgilia, who, though she only speaks a few words in the whole play, has been called "the loveliest of these flowers of Shakspere."

All her thoughts are of her husband, and her whole being breathes with love.[1] §4. The Romantic School.

1 The sonnets have not been mentioned. There was very little criticism of them in the last age. Before Malone's edition the only ones are those of Gildon 1640, and Sewell 1726. Malone pointed out that Daniel was Shakspere's model. Steevens did not think them worth reading.—Poems were published by Malone.

II.—Textual Criticism of Shakspere from Dryden to the End of the Eighteenth Century.

§1. Relations between Literary and Textual Criticism.

§1. CREATION is followed by criticism; and literary criticism naturally precedes textual. Literary criticism is permanent; textual criticism is incidental. The former is called into play by all good literature; the latter only when the text has been corrupted.

Literary Criticism is analytical.

If the author has revised his writings and superintended their publication, there is obviously no need for textual criticism. The object of literary criticism is to examine an author's writings from the point of view of literature, to investigate their right to be called literature, and to estimate their place in the same by analysing and explaining his art and thought.

§1. Relations between Literary and Textual Criticisms.

Textual Criticism is synthetic.

Textual criticism endeavours to fix from all the evidence available what the author himself wrote, or if evidence is lacking, to supply the same by conjecture.

Their point of contact is found in exegesis.

Exegetical criticism is necessary in endeavouring to analyse the author's thoughts and ideas, and it is also necessary in fixing his text.

The logical distinction between the methods employed in literary and textual criticism respectively, is the same as that between analysis and synthesis. In literary criticism we analyse the art and thought of the writer; in textual, we discuss various readings and conjecture new ones in order to build up the author's text by synthesis. We shall see that the further critics departed from the synthetic method in textual criticism, the further they wandered from truth.

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

§2. There was absolutely no textual criticism of Shakspere before the eighteenth century. The only editions of Shakspere were the Quartos and Folios, which really stand in place of MSS to an editor.

i. Folio and Quartos.

Eighteen plays appeared in Quarto form.

The first Folio contained thirty-six plays (all

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

except *Pericles*), eighteen of which were therefore then printed for the first time.

The editors of the first Folio speak of all former editions as "surreptitious or stolne." Hence the Quartos for a time fell into disuse, as a matter of fact in many cases the Folio text is demonstrably taken from that of the Quartos, and in some cases the Quartos contain the better text.

Typographical errors naturally abound in both. The Folios have certainly given us the better representation of the poet's versification. Though the errors are so many and so unequally divided that it is hard to classify their respective merits. The Folio is of course bound to be the basis of the text for the eighteen plays of which it contains the only text; but in the cases where the Folios have followed the Quartos, of course the Quartos must be taken as the basis.

The second Folio appeared in 1632. It is a reprint of the first, but has numerous emendations, some are corrections of printers' errors, others are conjectural and generally wrong.

The third Folio 1663 and again in 1664, this latter issue contained the seven doubtful plays. It is a

fairly exact reprint of the second.

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

The fourth Folio (1685) is much modernised in the spelling, and is naturally of no authority.

These then were the editions or MSS of Shakspere's plays existing at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

It is a significant fact that three different writers have applied the simile of a schoolmaster and child to the treatment of Shakspere by three different editors. Hallam in speaking of Johnson as an editor of Shakspere says "there is something magisterial in the manner wherein he dismisses each play like a boy's exercise." Dr. Ward says Pope "corrects Shakspere's loose orthography with the determined ease with which a schoolmaster corrects a schoolboy's blunders in an exercise on Latin suffixes." Dr. Dowden notes how Warburton "treats Shakspere with the contemptuousness a harsh schoolmaster might exhibit toward a naughty urchin."

ii. The Editors.

Though there is no doubt in our minds that the cap fits Warburton best, yet the fact that literary critics should have applied this simile to three different editors is a singulary clear revelation of

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

the spirit of Shaksperian editing in general during the last century.

This was essentially magisterial. It arose partly from the idea that they lived in a much more refined age than Shakspere, and partly from the rivalry that sprang up between editors, once "editing Shakspere" had come into fashion.

Two Schools of Textual Criticism.

Yet there are two quite distinct schools of textual criticism to be distinguished in the eighteenth century.

i. Common Sense School.

The first school shews the above spirit in the highest degree. They altered the text, not to what Shakspere might be supposed to have written, but to what they thought he ought to have written. We have called them the "Common-Sense" school,

Rowe's Edition, 1709.

for they were guided chiefly by that quality in their formation of the text. Naturally they were sometimes right under this guidance, but they were certainly far oftener wrong.

Yet the first editor of Shakspere must be excepted from the general remark on the spirit of Shaksperian criticism, and distinguished from the rest of the adherents of this school.

Rowe had that sincere admiration for Shakspere

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

which an ardent learner has for his master in the art. He reverenced his mighty genius and loved the man who had been represented as a picture of gentleness and modesty.

But his edition stands alone among all the eighteenth century editions of Shakspere. It was the only one which aimed at giving a text of Shakspere for popular reading. Rowe gives no notes to encumber the text; and for such an edition there is much to be said. He does not pretend to give a critical text. He modernises the text and corrects many of the typographical errors and more obvious corruptions.

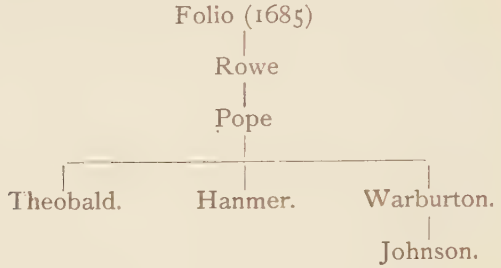
History of the text of Shakspere.

His radical defect is a critical one. He followed the latest edition that had appeared, the fourth Folio of 1685 which is the most faulty of all. But the results of this error were not confined to Rowe's edition; they affected all the editions before Capell's in 1768. Pope based his text on Rowe's, Theobald based his on Pope's, and so did Hanmer and Warburton. And Johnson based his on Warburton's.

Thus the effects of Rowe's error were widespread.

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

The following table will show this more clearly.



Thus the text of Shakspere in Johnson, in spite of the improvements made by the corrections of Rowe and Pope, and the conjectures and emendations of Theobald, and the restorations from the first Folio by Johnson, was fundamentally based on the worst text of Shakspere extant. From this it will become evident that Capell, who in his edition went straight back to the original editions, holds a pre-eminent position among the textual critics.

Steevens in his text (1793) went back fifty years and undid the labours of his predecessors. But Malone (in 1790) gave us a text still purer than Capell's.

But to return, Pope departs considerably from the true synthetic method of textual criticism. He altered Shakspere to suit his eighteenth century

tastes; thus he left out passages which seemed to him to be vulgar or out of taste, and omitted words and phrases to make the versification more even. Yet he certainly has considerable merit as a conjectural emendator, and he brought back one or two passages and readings from the Quartos.

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

2. Pope as an Editor, 1725.

Warburton only took Pope's text as a very unsubstantial basis, though he professes that it is worthy of the utmost confidence; for the emendations which he introduces from Theobald and Hanmer, together with his own army of emendations made the text quite different from Pope's, though no better on the whole. He departs more than any other editor from the true synthetic method, though the title page informs us that we are to expect the "Genuine Text" of Shakspere.

3. Warburton, 1747.

Yet we must distinguish very carefully between the *professions* and the *performances* of these eighteenth century editors. All the editors from Pope to Johnson profess to have collated the old copies, and to have carefully abstained from conjecture; yet none of them except Theobald (and not even he in the latter profession) were honest. Hanmer whose edition preceded

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

Warburton's by three years can only be mentioned here as having made some ingenious conjectures, and altered the text in much the same fashion as Pope had done.

4. Hanmer, 1744.

ii. Historical School.

Theobald, although following Pope in point of time, is yet the first of a new school. He brought out a criticism of Pope's edition in 1726, in which he exposed his faults and absurdities with some severity. Pope was nettled by this, and attacked Theobald most vehemently in the *Dunciad*. And from this time there is perpetual disputing and insult over Shakspere's text; very similar to what had taken place over his merits years before. The title of Theobald's pamphlet *Shakspere Restored*, marks the new school of criticism. Theobald was the first to apply synthetic criticism to Shakspere's text.

1. Theobald, 1733.

Although he departed from it somewhat in some of his conjectures, yet we cannot help recognising that there is very considerable evidence of it. It was more or less by accident and rivalry that he took Pope's text as his basis.

If we may be allowed to use a somewhat homely simile, we may illustrate the difference between

the textual criticism of Pope and Theobald.

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

Let us suppose Shakspere's text to be a broken down wall. Pope may be compared to the mason, who without attempting to restore the whole wall, simply levels it and gives it an artistic appearance; but Theobald is like one who looks about for the old bricks and restores them to their places, getting new ones if the old are not recoverable, and thus building up the whole wall. It is true that he gets a new brick when the old one might remain.

But Theobald excels in conjectural criticism.

He seems to have had a very ingenious mind and a singularly clear insight into Shakspere's meaning.

2. Johnson, 1765.

Johnson has not any great merit as a textual critic. He restored some readings from the first folio and made some good conjectures.

3. Capell, 1768.

Capell is a name which should be dear to all true lovers of Shakspere. He is certainly the best and safest textual critic of last century,—though he had a wonderful style and scarcely less wonderful method.

4. Steevens, 1773, '93.
5. Malone, 1790.

Malone and Steevens are perhaps considered

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

the greatest of the eighteenth century editors. They are considered separately later. Here we may say that their industry was prodigious. Yet the objection has been made (and justly) that they seem to wish to pour out all the learning they had acquired, in every shape and form, from musty black letter books, in their notes on Shakspere. But though Malone's edition (1790), and even the Variorum (1823) is not perfect, yet it would be the height of ingratitude not to acknowledge the debt that all modern editors owe to an edition which has greatly helped to give us such an admirable work as the *Cambridge Shakspere*.

iii. Incidental Criticism.

But we have yet to notice one or two incidental works which have contributed to the textual criticism of Shakspere.

1. Thos. Edwards' Canons of Criticism.

Warburton, by his edition of Shakspere, drew upon himself a storm of criticism. His most effective antagonist was certainly Thomas Edwards, who, by the very title of his book *Canons of Criticism*, satirised a passage in Warburton's *Preface*. Indeed the book is satire throughout, but that the satire is just, and applied with singular skill and exactness no one can

dispute. Here are some of his "Canons," which expose some of the chief defects of Warburton's criticism.

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

I.—"A professed critic has a right to declare that his author wrote whatever he thinks he ought to have written, with as much positiveness as if he had been at his elbow."

IV.—"Where he does not like an expression and yet cannot mend it, he may abuse his author for it."

He illustrates this from a passage in *Henry VIII.*—

"My life itself and the *best heart of it.*"

This is Warburton's note—

The best heart of it. The expression is monstrous. The heart is supposed the seat of life; but as if he had many lives and to each of them a heart, he says his *best heart.* A way of speaking that would become a cat rather than a king.

XI.—"He may make foolish amendments or explanations, and refute them; only to enhance the value of his critical skill."

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

Thus in *Macbeth*—

> Thou seest the heavens as troubled with man's act,
> Threaten this bloody *stage*.

Warburton remarks—

> One might be tempted to think the poet wrote *strage*, slaughter, but I, who know him better, am persuaded he used *stage* for act.

Edwards remarks—

> None but an erring pedant could be tempted to think that Shakspere wrote *strage*, which is a barbarous word, without any authority produced for it.
>
> XV.—"He may explain a difficult passage by words absolutely unintelligible."

These specimens at once show the faults of Warburton and the acuteness of his assailant.

2. Grey's Notes, 1755.

3. Upton's Critical Observations, 1746.

Heath's Revisal, 1765.

Zachary Grey, Upton, and Heath also attacked him. Grey's collected *Notes* are chiefly useful for their explanations and illustrations of Shakspere's meaning; and Heath has one or two very fair conjectures. Johnson's edition was attacked very violently by Kenrick, though his savageness was uncalled for.

Ritson in his *Remarks* points out some mis-

takes in Johnson and Steevens' edition. He gives evidence of some acquaintance with the old copies.

§2. History of Textual Criticism of last age.

His remarks appear to be on the whole very judicious and sensib'e, though there does not seem to be any striking merit in his work.

5. Ritson's Remarks, 1783.

Davies' notes are scarcely of any more va'ue from a textual than from a literary point of view.

6. Davies' Dramatic Miscellanies, 1784.

Tyrwhitt has some acute observations and plausible conjectures in his book.

Monck Mason's *Comments*, with which we shall close this review, seems to us to be the best piece of disconnected textual criticism on Shakspere. Some of his conjectures are good, and his explanations of terms and words are singularly accurate. Thus he explains the meaning of "quote," "incorrect," in *Hamlet* accurately, where former editors had missed the right shade of meaning.

7. M. Mason's Comments, 1785.

§3. Rowe's edition has the honour of being the first real edition of Shakspere's plays.

§3. The Common-sense School.

i. Nicholas Rowe.

It has been remarked that he followed the text of the fourth Folio (1685). Capell was the first to point this out, and it is now indisputable. He never consulted the first Folio, and when he

§3. The Common-sense School.

corrects his text by a reading which occurs in it, the coincidence is certainly accidental.

1. His treatment of Folios and Quartos.

The Quartos received no greater attention from him than the earlier Folios. Though, in the words of the editors of the *Cambridge Shakspere*, "it seems, while the volume containing *Romeo and Juliet* was in the press, he learned the existence of a Quarto edition, for he has printed the Prologue, given in Quartos and omitted in Folios, at the end of the play. He did not take the trouble to compare the text of the Quarto with that of Folio. But still he has used the Quartos a little. Thus in *Hamlet iv. 4.* he has inserted the whole part which the Quartos give, but is omitted by Folios. But on the other hand he has omitted the beautiful scene in *Lear iv. 3*, which is only preserved by the Quartos."

Thus then his treatment of the Folios and Quartos was purely arbitrary, and not guided by any principles of criticism; and the emendations introduced by him are of a similar nature. But it is a great mistake to criticise Rowe's edition, as if it had appeared in the middle of the century, and had been undertaken by him in a critical spirit. As Johnson well pointed out Rowe's idea was

§3. The Common-sense School.

simply to bring out an edition of Shakspere similar to "those of his fraternity, with the appendages of a life and recommendatory preface." He did not undertake the task of giving us a critical text, but simply corrected those printer's errors which came under his notice.

He did not entertain suspicion of greater corruption in the text, or at any rate did not make it part of his task to deal with it.

The evidence of all the eighteenth century criticism on Shakspere shows that he attained his object in making Shakspere better known.

But he did much more than this, he started and contributed considerably to the textual criticism of his works. His chief service consists in the additions and corrections he was able to make in the text owing to his stage experience.

ii. Emendatory Criticism.

His Dramaturgic Additions.

Thus he prefixed lists of "dramatis personæ" to many of the plays; he divided many of the plays into Acts and Scenes, which were undivided or wrongly divided in the Folios and Quartos; he also supplied notices of exits and entrances and other stage directions. His emendations, though many of them simple and obvious, were at any

§3. The Common-sense School.

rate such as had to be made; and by correcting the text he saved it from the hands of some later editors who would have been in danger of bungling over it.

(*a*) Typographical errors.

Most of Rowe's alterations will come under the head of emendatory criticism; and by far the most of these are emendations of typographical errors. Among these we may reckon his modernising of the spelling, such as "Ay" printed "I" in Ff., and his insertion of stops, especially interrogations, and alteration of others where the meaning was obscured by false punctuation.

Some of the misprints are obvious at first sight, thus in *Merchant of Venice* i., *1 27* Folios, Quartos, have

> "And see my wealthy Andrew docks in sand."

Rowe changed "docks" to "dock'd," which has been adopted after him.

In other cases the context helped him to his correction, thus in A.Y.L., *ii., 3. 71*. Adam says—

> "From *seventeen* years till now, almost fourscore,
> Here lived I, but now live here no more.
> At seventeen years many there fortunes seek,
> But at fourscore it is too late a week."

In the first line Folio had "seaventie," but the

§3. The Common-sense School.

"seventeen" in the third line shows this to be a misprint.

In the well-known lines in *Macbeth*, *i.*, *7. 47*,

> "I dare do all that may become a man;
> Who dares *do* more is none."

we owe the sense to Rowe, who substituted "do" for the "no" of Folios.

Metrical considerations have sometimes supplied him with an emendation. In *A.Y.L.*, *iii.*, 2. *113*, Rowe has restored the line

> "Why should this *a* desert be?"

Where Folios omit "a."

Sometimes it seems as though he had corrected one of the old copies by another. Thus, in *A.Y.L.*, *ii.*, *4. 41*, Ff. read "Alas poor shepherd! searching of *they would*." Later Folios altered 'they would" to "their wound."

But it is probable that Rowe only had the reading of the later Folios before him.

(*b*) Of old Forms.

He has still further altered old forms, such as "moe" to "more," "windring" to "winding," in *Tempest*, *iv.*, *1. 178*.

But some of Rowe's emendations are almost

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iii. Conjectural.

conjectural, thus in *M.N.D.*, *i.*, *1. 10.*,

> "And then the moon like to a silver bow
> New-bent in heaven," &c.

Rowe conjectured "new-bent" for "now bent" of Folios, Quartos.

Defective owing to i. Ignorance of Construction.

But, as might be expected, Rowe is not as a rule happy in his conjectures, owing to his insufficient acquaintance with Shaksperian construction and phraseology; thus in *Tempest*, *i.*, *2. 29*—

> "The direful spectacle of the wreck
> . . . . . .
> I have with such provision in mine art
> So safely ordered, that there is *no soul*—
> No not so much perdition as an hair
> Betid to any creature in the vessel."

Rowe here conjectured "no soul lost."

But such a confusion of construction is quite common in Shakspere, whose ideas flowed so rapidly that sometimes he committed them to paper without connecting them grammatically.

Rowe generally leaves real corruption alone, but in *Hamlet*, *i.*, *3. 74.*, his conjectured line

> "Are most select and generous, chief in that"

is, on the whole, the best suggestion yet made.

2. Obscure sense of word.

Sometimes a word used in an obscure sense leads him to alter it without cause.

A.Y.L., *iii.*, *5*, in the song of Jacques, §3. The Common-sense School.

"And *turn* his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat."

Rowe conjectured "tune" for "turn"—not without some evidence.

Again moved by a spirit of prudery, he has altered the text unwarrantably. *A.Y.L.*, *i.*, *3. 11.*, where Celia asks 3. From spirit of prudery.

"But is this all for your father?"

Rosalind answers, scarcely immodestly,

"No, some of it is for *my child's father*!"

Rowe alters to "my father's child."

We have been at some pains to show what Rowe has done, because we believe he has not had his due meed of praise.

It is impossible, in spite of any admiration we may have for Pope's poetical genius, to treat of him as a textual critic of Shakspere without contempt and even disgust. It is not only the "cock sure"[1] spirit in which he has undertaken the work, nor his want of devotion which makes him complain of the dull duty of an editor, that is repulsive to us; but his downright dishonesty. ii. Alexander Pope.

1 Dr. Ward's expression.

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This prejudices us against him and was undoubtedly the cause of the utter failure of his edition. In describing his method, he says, "I have discharged the dull duty of an editor to my best judgment, with more labour than I expect thanks, with a religious abhorence of all innovation, and without any indulgence to my private sense or conjecture." "The readings which I have preferred into the text are constantly *ex fide codicum*."

It has been very justly remarked[2] that this is much more like a description of what the editor did *not* do, than of what he did. But Pope's dishonesty did not stop here. Anyone will admit that such flagrant inconsistency deserved unqualified exposure. This it received in Theobald's *Shakspere Restored*. Pope was quite conscious that the exposure was just, for he adopted many of Theobald's conjectures into his second edition; but he had not the honesty to admit it, and spent the rest of his days in quarelling with and satirising Theobald. The popular voice in his own day gave verdict in favour of Theobald, and the critics

2 Preface to *Cambridge Shakspere*.

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Warburton on Pope's edition.

of this century have at last agreed to give the same verdict. We can agree with Warburton, who was a little more than bishop but much less than divine, when he says that this "illustrious editor" showed "great prudence" in leaving the explanation of his author to the critic by profession, though he would have shown still greater prudence if he had left the textual criticism in similar hands; but we do not see where Pope's "modesty" comes in. But "dear Mr. Pope" was highly favoured by this learned dignitary, and consequently the latter can say that he "discharged the great parts of this art so well as to make his edition the best foundation for all further improvements."

Yet Warburton himself had the good sense not to take Pope's text as a foundation, without altering it considerably with the help of Theobald's conjectures and Hanmer's.

Johnson has pointed out the absurdity and ignorance of Warburton in his praise of Pope for having separated the genuine from the spurious plays; for they were already separated in Ff. 3, 4. "With equal judgment" (to that shown in this) Warburton continues "though not always with the

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same success he attempted to clear the genuine plays from the interpolated scenes: he then consulted the old editions; and by a careful collation of them, rectified the faulty and supplied the imperfect reading in a great number of places."

As regards the first part of this eulogy we may submit that there was not very much judgment required in separating afresh what had already been separated before. Anyone who has examined the edition in question will find the second part to be sheer misrepresentation.

Johnson on Pope's edition.

Johnson's critique on Pope's edition is as just as it is acute. He has pointed out the causes of the failure of Pope's edition, *viz* :—the wrong spirit in which he undertook his work and his own inaptness for minute collation.

Capell on Pope's edition.

Capell gives a just estimate of Pope's real services to textual criticism; while Malone gives a no less exact account of his defects as an editor, and the causes thereof.

i. His treatment of Folios and Quartos.

In Pope's treatment of the old editions it cannot be denied that he has made a great advance on Rowe. He was the first to investigate the re ations between the Folios and Quartos. His estimate of

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the first Folio is that in respect of literal errors it is better than the Quartos, but in all other respects far worse. This is a sweeping generalisation which certainly cannot be accepted.

He goes on to illustrate its inferiority.

His first charge against it is that there are far more numerous additions of trifling and bombast passages in F_1 than in the Quartos; and again a great many beautiful passages which are extant in the first single editions are omitted in this, apparently to shorten scenes.

He here presumes either that the editors of the Folio had the Quartos before them or that the Folios and Quartos came originally from the same source.

This was certainly not the case in many plays, and certainly not in those in which there are discrepancies of any moment.

"The original copies" of which the editors of F_1 speak in their Preface, are supposed by Pope to be "those which had lain ever since the author's day in the play-house, and had from time to time been cut or added to arbitrarily."

This is a very plausible theory, but it is not an

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adequate one. Arbitrary omissions or additions by playwrights cannot account for radical change in characters or modifications of plot.

His theory holds for all other defects, such as the names of actors slipping into the text, or the arbitrary divisions into acts and scenes, the transposal of acts and scenes, omission of verses, confusion of characters and speeches, and of verse and prose, all of which are mentioned by Pope. Yet he does not seem to have noticed that many of these defects are common to the Quartos and the Folios, and the confusion of verse and prose and bad arrangement of the versification are far worse in the Quartos.

The fact is, Pope generalised before having made himself very minutely acquainted with the subject of his investigation.

As regards the Quartos, Pope has rightly conjectured that Shakspere did not have the supervision of the Quartos printed during his life-time. Shakspere had probably no idea of writing for publication, he wrote for the stage, and he does not seem to have thought more about his plays after they had been acted.

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Pope is also right in his remark on the correctness of the printing of *2 Henry IV.* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*; the Quarto of the latter by Roberts is a marvel of good printing for that age.

From this it will be seen that Pope had given some attention to the old copies of Shakspere's plays, and that his investigation of them bore some real fruit; and whatever errors may be found in his theories concerning them, he deserves praise for having started this branch of Shaksperian criticism. It is to be regretted, however, that Pope did not pay more attention to them in printing his own text. Capell was the first to point out that Pope printed his text from that of Rowe. This can be proved by observing how Pope has printed Rowe's corrections and mistakes without remark or alteration.

One good result of Pope's acquaintance with the older copies, was that he restored to the text many passages (unquestionably genuine), which appear in the Quartos, but are wanting in the Folios, as in *Hamlet;* and also passages, in plays

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which were revised, from a later Quarto, which did not occur in an earlier one, as in *Merry Wives*, *2 Henry IV.*, *Henry V.*

Yet there was a corresponding evil result. Passages of this nature, which did not please him he omitted, on the charge that they had been "foisted in by players." This is a very common practice with him. We need only refer to the speech of the Friar in *Romeo and Juliet* Act IV., where Juliet lies on her bed as if dead, which he has curtailed; and he has omitted about eight lines in Hamlet's speech to his mother "Look here upon this picture." But turning to his more minute criticism of the text, we owe a good deal to Pope for having indicated the place of each scene.

He also made a fresh division into scenes, making a new scene on the entrance of each new character. In *Henry V.* his division of the Acts and arrangement of the Choruses, are those which are now generally adopted. He also added some new stage-directions. He wanted to add one too many in *Henry V.*, where in the famous account of Falstaff's death, he supposed "A table of

Greenfield's" was a stage-direction which had crept into the text, though where it should creep from is not quite obvious. §3. The Common-sense School.

In emendatory criticism Pope corrected many typographical errors, which had been left unaltered by Rowe. Thus in *Twelfth Night, I., 2, 15*, "like *Arion* on the dolphin's back," Pope has restored the right word from *Orion* Ff. ii. Emendatory Criticism. (*a*) Typographical Errors.

He has also like Rowe modernized many old words and forms: such as "help'd" for "holp" in *Tempest, I., 2, 63*, "blessedly holp hither," and quite unwarrantably in *Hamlet, I., 3, 49*, he reads "careless" for "reckless" and in many other passages. He has altered these quite recklessly for he was quite acquainted with these old forms. (*b*) Of old words.

There are very few, if any, cases where Pope has amended the reading of one of the old copies with the help of another. This task, being much more minute than inserting a passage from one, which is omitted in another copy, was perhaps too "dull" for him.

But Pope has made countless emendations in the most licentious manner, so that he has little reason to sneer at "Bentley's desperate hook." (*c*) Licentious Emendations.

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We have not classed these as conjectural criticism, because there is no real conjecture about them, they are simply foisted in, or omitted, because Mr. Pope says they must be.

1. Suppresion of lines.

He has suppressed lines with reckless freedom, if there is anything low or trivial about them, or if they are unintelligible to him.

Of the first kind the lines in *King Richard III., III., 3, 7-8 and 16* are examples; of the second, the corrupt passage in *Hamlet*,

> "The dram of eale
> Doth all the noble substance of a doubt
> To his own scandal."

2. Omission of words.

But Pope also thought an editor had a divine right to correct the language, metre and phraseology of the poet committed to his charge, according to his own ideas and impressions. Now Pope's ideas and impressions belonged to the eighteenth century, the Augustan age of our literature, as it has been called; Shakspere was of the Elizabethan age.

Consequently Pope's ideas and impressions of metre are just opposite to those of Shakspere; the former required an exactness which was

entirely antagonistic to the freedom of the latter.

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Again words had naturally changed a good deal, old forms had grown quite archaic.

But not only were the ages different, but the genius of Shakspere was of quite a different stamp from that of Pope.

By far the greater number of these reckless emendations was made on account of the metre. Instances are to be found in every play where Pope "indulged his private sense."

In *Hamlet I.*, 1, 184,

"Dared to the *combat*: in which our valiant Hamlet."

Pope changes "combat" to "fight," to make the line smoother.

Sometimes he lessens the force of a passage by his alterations. Thus in *Hamlet I.*, 2, 83, when Hamlet's mother asks him, if he admits that the loss of a father is a common occurrence in nature, why it should *seem* so particular to him, he answers:

"Seems, madam, nay it *is*, I know not 'seems,'
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,

. . . . . .

Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief
That can denote me truly; these *indeed* seem."

Here the word "indeed" is about as forcible a

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word as Shakspere could have used. But Pope alters it to "may" to smooth the versification. This weakens the line enormously. Hamlet wishes to lay special emphasis on it; he does not wish to admit the possibility of a doubt concerning the "seeming" character of these outward trappings, because he wishes to point out the inconsistency between them and the king's actions.

In the same play, *II.* 2, 15, 16 where Polonius says: "I will most humbly take my leave of you," Hamlet answers, "You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I more willingly will part withal: except my life, except my life, except my life." So the Quartos. Folios have "Except my life, my life." Pope simply prints "Except my life." The repetition in the mouth of Hamlet is pregnant with pathos; and this is mostly lost in Pope's reading.

Words are omitted carelessly in countless instances just to get a little more smoothness in the lines.

Yet here we must acknowledge that by his arrangement of lines Pope has sometimes undoubtedly restored the line as Shakspere wrote

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it. Thus in *Hamlet, i. 1. 129*, where Horatio apostrophises the Ghost, the Quartos and Folios have as one line:

"Speak to me if there be any good thing to be done."

Pope has rightly assigned "Speak to me" to a line by itself, where with these short lines interspersed we get an impression of the excited state of the speaker's mind.

In the well-known line in *Hamlet i. 2, 90.*,

"That father lost, lost his and the survivor bound,"

Pope changed it to "That father his, &c.," chiefly, we believe, on account of the metre, for we do not wish to assign to him that "thick-headedness" which characterises Warburton's note on the passage.

When Pope did not understand a word he had no scruple in substituting another. Thus in the line

"Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled,"

For "disappointed," Pope had "Unanointed," not understanding the meaning of the word.

There are many examples where Pope has made alterations because he did not understand the construction. Thus in *Hamlet i. 2, 36*, he reads "which" for "of."

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iii. Conjectural Criticism.

But there is much more to be said in favour of Pope's real conjectural criticism. His conjectures are always ingenious, even if they are ingenious blunders. It was inevitable that Pope should blunder, because his acquaintance with the language, &c., of the Elizabethan age was very slight. Thus in *Lear i. 4, 291*, he perverts the meaning of Lear by reading "The untender woundings of a father's curse," instead of "untented," &c. Lear would not apply such an epithet as "untender," because he thought the woundings which he gave were deserved, whereas "untented" adds bitterness to the curse.

But Pope left many unquestionably true conjectures for succeeding editors. Thus in *Hamlet I. 1, 63*, if he did not make the right conjecture (though there are plenty to support him) he at any rate marked out the way to it by reading "Polack."

His conjecture in *Macbeth II., 1. 55*, "Tarquin's ravishing *strides*," where Folios have "sides," has been generally accepted.

In *Merry Wives, I. 3, 68*, his reading "Oeillades," cleared up a passage which seemed hopeless

When he makes Exeter (*Henry V., II. 4, 125*) say:

"Caves and womby vaultages of France
Shall *chide* your trespass : "

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he makes him speak sense, whereas the Folio and Quarto reading, "hide," gave the opposite meaning to what was intended.

There are numerous other excellent conjectures which have helped the criticism of the text, and Theobald by his restorations counteracted a great part of the injury which he did to it by his alterations.

iii. Sir Thos. Hanmer.

Sir Thomas Hanmer tells us that "What the publick is here to expect is a true and correct edition of Shakspere's works, cleared from the corruptions with which they have hitherto abounded," and yet it seems to us very doubtful if Hanmer had any adequate knowledge of the old copies. He has taken Pope for his model, and has included many of his errors in his text; though he has adopted some of Theobald's corrections.

The origin of this edition is thus described: "One of the great admirers of this incomparable author, hath made it the amusement of his leisure hours for many years past to look over his writings with a careful eye, to note the obscurities introduced

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into the text, and according to the best of his judgment restore the sense and purity and of it."

This certainly prepares us in some measure for the kind of edition which we are to expect from him. Yet our ideas are somewhat disturbed when we read later that "this rule hath been most strictly observed, not to give a lease to fancy or indulge a licentious spirit of criticism, as if it were fit for anyone to presume to judge what Shakspere ought to have written, instead of endeavouring to discover truly and retrieve what he did write." Of the two schools of criticism here distinguished, Hanmer unquestionably belongs to the former.

He was a gentleman of good education, and of natural sagacity. His conjectures, in spite of Dr. Warburton, are very often extremely ingenious, though it must be admitted more often wrong than right, and on the whole it is to be feared he often left the text in a worse state than Theobald left it.

Warburton on Hanmer's edition.

Warburton's opinion of him is, as usual, absurdly prejudiced. He accuses him of plagiary, and of making use of his papers to form conjectures for himself. We agree with Dr. Johnson in thinking that Warburton's criticism on Hanmer's metrical

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changes is too harsh. Not that we think he is often right, but because the criticism should have fallen upon Pope, who changed the text just as much, and whom Hanmer followed, in doing it further. "He hath tricked up the old bard, from hand to foot in all the finical exactness of a modern measurer of syllables."

Johnson on Hanmer's edition.

Johnson's estimate of Hanmer differs singularly from that of Warburton. The former considers him eminently qualified for the task which he set himself to do, Warburton wondered how he came to think he was. While, however, we think Johnson is only just when he ascribes ingenuity to him, we believe he is quite wrong in saying that he had read much, *i.e.*, of our older literature, for this seems to be one of his chief deficiencies.

Capell on Hanmer's edition.

Capell has given us a very exact critique on his edition. He throws out the hope that Hanmer's style of editing will not have many followers, for he describes it as "destroying all marks of peculiarity and notes of time, all easiness of expression and numbers, all justness of thought, and the nobility of not a few of their conceptions." Yet he admits rightly that his conjectures are

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Malone on Hanmer's edition.

His Conjectures often ingenious.

oftentimes not unhappy.

Malone's notice of him is short and sweet. "Of Sir Thos. Hanmer it is only necessary to say that he adopted all the innovations of Pope, adding to them whatever caprice dictated."

But Hanmer has left us some conjectures which have since been adopted. Thus in *M. N. D.*, *I. 1. 187*, both Folios and Quartos show a slight corruption:

> "Sickness is catching! O were favour so!
> *Your words I catch*, fair Hermia ere I go."

So Folios; "Ide catch," Quartos.

Hanmer's restoration, "Yours would I catch," fits in much better with the whole sense of the passage.

In *Temp. I., 1. 6*, he conjectured, and probably rightly, "ling, heath, broom, furze," for "long heath, brown furze." A man, who is about to drown, would not in his excited frame of mind, think about such epithets as "long" and "brown," whereas the enumeration of four kinds of *terra firma* tend to show this excitement. But his ignorance both of the language and of the construction has led him into error. Thus in

Temp. iv. 1. 156, he would read "track" for "rack." Some of his conjectures are amusingly absurd. Thus in *King John*, where Constance says

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"For grief is proud and makes his owner *stoop*."

Hanmer, for what reason we cannot imagine, thinks grief rather makes one "stout."

His conjecture in *King Lear II.*, where he makes Edmund say, in his soliloquy, of Edgar his legitimate brother:

"Edmund the base
Shall *toe* the legitimate."

is perhaps more amusing now than it was then, when the verb had no meaning but what Hanmer gave it, viz., "to be on a level with."

As far as printing and binding went, we are told this was a most luxurious edition.

iv. William Warburton.

Warburton is the last of the Common-sense School, and as a textual critic he is decidedly the worst.

We have already had occasion to refer to his arrogance. To say more on this point would be a waste of time, ink and paper. We must just remark that the way he treated his coadjutors can scarcely be paralleled even in this age. The author

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of the *Divine Legation of Moses* had certainly too much of the Mosaic spirit in him, such as when Moses slew the Egyptian. Perhaps Hallam, who is almost invariably as just as he is concise and to the point, gives as fair an estimate of Warburton as we can desire. "Among the commentators of Shakspere, Warburton, always striving to display his own acuteness and scorn of others, deviates more than anyone else from the meaning." While he can never refrain from shooting out his sarcasms at Theobald and Hanmer, he has yet made most extensive use of their conjectures.

Johnson on Warburton's edition.

Johnson evidently controlled himself in writing his estimate of him. He regrets that Warburton should have considered some of his notes as part of his serious employment. He points out that the predominant error of his commentary is acquiescence in his first thoughts; and while he admits his perverse interpretations and improbable conjectures, he points out that he has made some happy conjectures and sagacious interpretations.

Malone on Warburton's edition.

Malone is severe on him, yet not unjustly severe. He aptly compares him to Salmasius, who is said to have erected his throne on a heap of stones,

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that he might have them at hand to throw at the heads of all who passed by.

Warburton, though he pretends to give a "genuine text," can only have had a very small acquaintance with the old copies. Yet he has made a few ingenious conjectures. Perhaps the most noted is that which Johnson called a noble emendation.

Conjectural Criticism.

In *Hamlet II., 2, 183*, where Quartos and Folios read, "For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog being a *good* kissing carrion," Warburton reads, "being a *god* kissing carrion." Though this conjecture has found many supporters (Malone was not one of them), few will go with Warburton in his elaborate interpretation of the passage. In *Merry Wives II., 3, 92*, he was certainly on the right way when he conjectured for "Cry'd game," "Cry aim" which Capell improved to "Cried I aim?"

But he has thought no passage too sacred to be tampered with. Indeed he has meddled with nearly all the most well-known passages (lyrics included) in Shakspere.

In the famous speech of Prospero, *Temp. IV.*,

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I. 151. Warburton's note gives us an instance of how he could create a difficulty and then give an inexplicable solution. He wishes to read the line "And like the baseless fabric of this vision," Folios, thus: "And like the baseless fabric of th' air visions"

(4) His learned Conjectures.

Another of these learned conjectures is found in *Othello IV., 1. 47.* Just before Othello goes into a trance, when he hears the direful news which Iago gives him, he says of Cassio's conduct, "Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing *without some instruction.*" Here "without some instruction" is quite simple and means "without some cause." Warburton would read "induction," which is another "noble emendation" according to Dr. Johnson, and he supports it by the most far-fetched reasoning imaginable. "The ridiculous blunder," he informs us, "of writing 'instruction' for 'induction,' has indeed sunk it into arrant nonsense."

(5) His arrogant Conjectures.

There is a good deal of nonsense in Shakspere, according to Dr. Warburton. In *L. L. L. IV., 3. 313,* in the well known lines:

> "For where is any author in the world
> Teaches such *beauty* as a woman's eye?"

Warburton remarks on the second line, "This line is absolute nonsense." We should read "duty," *i.e.*, ethics, or the offices and devoirs that belong to man.

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But Shakspere did not write English. In *Othello i.*, where Iago says to Roderigo, "defeat thy favour with an usurped beard," we hear "this is not English. We should read 'dissect thy favour,' *i.e.*, turn it out of its seat."

He has tried to make nonsense of a line in Jaques' song, "Blow, blow thou winter wind," by reading "Because thou art not *sheen*" for "seen." And in Autolycus' song he has mutilated the first verse.

We just notice in conclusion one example of defensive criticism. In *M. N. D.* II., 2, 53, Pope and Theobald read "chiding Autumn." Warburton restored "childing Autumn" very acutely. But there are not many such restorations in his edition.

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i. Theobald.

§4. We must now go back in time to Theobald. He was the first to adopt the synthetic method in textual criticism of Shakspere; treating Shakspere, as he remarks, like a "corrupt classic;"

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and he thus opens a new school of criticism, which, however. Hanmer and Warburton did not follow.

The ideal which he set before him is thus stated in his Preface: "Nothing is altered but what by the clearest reasoning can be found to be a corruption of the true text, and the alteration a real restoration of the genuine reading." This is obviously an unattainable ideal; for in many cases it is impossible to decide whether corruption exists or no, or to prove that any conjecture is a restoration of the genuine reading.

Theobald has undoubtedly fallen short of it. He has often altered the text where there is anything but clear proof of corruption.

His chief fault sprang from his unfortunate rivalry with Pope. In his anxiety to expose Pope's mistakes, he has fallen into the error of basing his text on Pope's. This can be proved by the numerous errors committed by Pope, that he has admitted into his text. Two examples will be quite sufficient. In *Temp. I.*, 2, 63, we have seen that Pope changed the reading of the old copies, "holp," into "help'd." This alteration is retained by Theobald. If he had had the old

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copies before him he would certainly have retained "holp." Again in *Hamlet I.*, 2, 248, where the old copies read:

"And whatsoever *else shall hap* to-night."

Pope altered to "And whatsoever *shall befall* to-night" Theobald has again taken Pope's reading into his text. If he had printed his text from the old copies he would not only have given their reading, but would have added a note on Pope's departure from the text.

The greatest Textual Critic of Shakspere.

But in spite of this failing, and in spite of his readiness to conjecture, Theobald is, in our opinion, the greatest Shaksperian textual critic that has ever been. The fact that the Editors of the *Cambridge Shakspere* can say "Where the Folios are all obviously wrong and the Quartos fail us, we have introduced into the text several conjectural emendations; especially we have often had recourse to Theobald's ingenuity," is sufficient proof of the truth of this opinion.

That his merit has only been recognised of late years[1] is a fact that must be attributed to the un-

1 Coleridge himself expresses contempt for Theoba'd in his notes, and remarks over one passage, "What a noble pair of ears this worthy Theobald must have had." Yet he was well acquainted with Shakspere's versification. Cf. his 28th note in *Measure for Measure.*

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mitigated satire hurled against him by Pope, in a spirit of mean rivalry, mingled with a sense of utter discomfiture. Pope's satirical representation of him in the *Dunciad* as personified dullness, is as unjust a satire as was ever penned. That a man who has made such brilliant conjectures as Theobald has made, should be anything approaching to dull is an hypothesis inexplicable to any but his professed enemies and rivals.

Theobald must have been of a very acute turn of mind. It is quite inadequate to account for his success merely by the fact of his industry; for in many instances where both Pope and Theobald have offered original conjectures, Theobald's have been infinitely superior, and show that he has understood the passage which his rival has not half taken in.

Warburton on Theobald's edition.

Pope's dear friend, Warburton, continued to ascribe dullness to Theobald, and also accused him of plagiary, for which we do not think there is any foundation.

Warburton's whole critique on Theobald's edition shows a spirit of petty rivalry and unbounded envy.

To say that Theobald left his author "in a ten

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times worse condition than he found him," is a gross misrepresentation of fact, and nothing short of calumny.

Theobald's merit consists in far more than "a punctilious collation of the old books, and correcting what was manifestly wrong in the later editions by what was manifestly right in the earlier." He was certainly better acquainted with "the progress and various steps of the English tongue and the peculiarity of Shakspere's language," than either Pope or Warburton.

Johnson's Critique on Theobald.

Johnson's notice of Theobald is a good instance of the rambling criticism into which that great man sometimes fell. He has certainly hit upon one of the secrets of Theobald's success when he says he was "zealous for minute accuracy and not negligent in pursuing it." But we maintain that Theobald was not 'a man of narrow comprehension and small acquisitions," even if he had "no native or intrinsic splendour of genius." Yet, while we hold that Johnson had no grounds whatever for calling Theobald "weak and ignorant, mean and faithless," we think he is only just when he speaks of "the exuberant excrescence

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of his diction, his triumphant exultations over Rowe and Pope, and his contemptible ostentation."

Capell on Theobald.

It is quite baffling to see how all the editors, even Capell, take up the cudgels against Theobald. Capell speaks of his edition as "only a little better than Pope's by his having a few more materials, of which he was not a better collator than the other, nor did he excel him in use of them."

We can only explain this opinion from Capell by the assumption that he had not a full knowledge of what Theobald had done, but was led more by the verdict of succeeding editors, though even Johnson and Warburton would grant that he was a better collator of his materials than Pope. Malone is much juster in his estimate of Theobald.

i. His treatment of Folios and Quartos.

Theobald mentions the first and second Folios amongst his editions of authority, and has well distinguished them from the third which he reckons as of middle authority, and the fourth, which he omits altogether. He restored to the text many of the genuine readings of the Folios, though, as we have mentioned, he really based his edition on Pope's.

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But Theobald's most fruitful collation was that of the Quartos. He restored still more passages than Pope from them, and innumerable words. It is in this part of his work that Theobald's industry gave him the advantage.

In accounting for the bad condition of the Quartos, he gives a reason which is not mentioned by Pope. He suggests that many pieces were "taken down in shorthand and improperly copied by ear from a representation."

ii. Emendatory Criticism.

His pure emendations are very numerous. There are several instances in which he has supplied stage-directions; in one notable example he has cleared one from the text, which Pope and Rowe took to be part of it.

In *A. Y. L. iv.*, 2 13,

"The rest shall bear this burden"

was taken by Pope to be part of the Forester's song.

He has also corrected some wrong arrangements of speeches. Thus in *Temp. iv.*, 1. 106-117, Pope gave the whole piece to Juno; but Theobald was sensible enough to see that the latter part beginning

"Earth's increase foison plenty"

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belonged to Ceres.

It certainly detracts considerably from his edition that he has not numbered the scenes.

(*a*). Typographical Errors.

There still remained numerous typographical errors for Theobald to correct. Thus in *M. N. D.* *i.*, 1, 136, Quartos and Folios read

"O cross! too high to be enthralled to *love*."

Theobald first corrected "love" to "low."

Again in the same play, *iii.*, 2, 250, he rightly reads "prayers" for "praise," and in *iv.*, 1, 46, where Quartos and Folios together with Pope, would make Titania give her fairies a final discharge by telling them to be "always away," Theobald rightly makes it into a command to duty by reading "be all ways away."

There is a very excellent example in *iv.*, 1, 80, of the same play, the old editions read:

"Titania musick call, and strike more dead
Than common sleep. Of all these fine the sense."

By an admirable emendation he gave us:

"Titania music call, and strike more dead
Than common sleep of all these *five* the sense."

Theobald frequently goes wrong in trying to restore a rhyme by emending a word.

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iii. Conjectural Criticism.

But the glory of Theobald is his conjectures. Pope has won himself a name by his genius; Theobald though no genius, will be remembered in connexion with Shakspere, perhaps as long as he is read. Indeed, two of his conjectures would alone have made him immortal.

These are in *Henry V.* ii., 3, 16, where in turning "a table of Greenfields" into "a babbled of green fields," he has restored a piece of humour. And in *Romeo and Juliet* i., 1, 140, where the Folios read:

> "Like to the bud nipped with the envious frost
> Ere it can spread its sweet leaves to the air,
> Or dedicate its beauty to the *same*."

he has turned this last feeble line into the true poetry of Shakspere, by reading:

> "Or dedicate its beauty to the *sun*."

But he has given us countless other conjectures, some of them not much less brilliant than the two just mentioned.

1. Showing his poetic taste.

There is another well known line which we owe in its perfect state to Theobald in *Macbeth* i., 7, 6:

> "But here upon this bank and *shoal* of time,
> We'd jump the life to come."

where Theobald changes the "school" of Folios into the poetically suggestive "*shoal*."

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2. Ingenuity.

The following conjecture shows a remarkable insight into the author's meaning, and acquaintance with his style. In *M. N. D. i.*, 1. 217-9, Quartos and Folios read:

> "Emptying our bosóms of their counsel *swell'd*
> There my Lysander and myself shall meet,
> And thence from Athens turn away our eyes
> To seek new friends and stranger *companions*."

Theobald changed "swell'd" to "sweet," and "companions" to "companies" (a very common form in Shakspere), thus restoring rhyme, metre and sense.

3. Knowledge of older language.

Many of his conjectures attest his knowledge of the older language, such as his change of "would" to "wood" (*T. G. of V. ii.*, 3, 30).

iv. Defensive Criticism.

Although Malone is quite just in saying that Theobald was a considerable innovator, yet we cannot forget how he defended his author's text against the reckless innovations of Pope. His defensive criticism shows us that Theobald was a most careful student of Shakspere, and grasped every shade of his meaning. Thus in *T. G. of V. iv.*, 4, 197, "Her eyes were grey as grass" is read by Rowe and Pope. Theobald restores the reading of the old copies, "grey as glass."

Other examples are "yellowness" for "jealousies" in *Merry Wives i., 3, III*, and in *i., 4, 23*, "Cain-coloured," which, as he acutely points out, refers to the portraits of Cain with yellow hair. And lastly in *M. of V. iii.*, 2, 97, he restores "guiled shore" for gilded shore" of Pope.

Enough illustrations have been given, we trust, to show that Theobald cannot have been the man Warburton and Pope would have us believe.

Judging from his work, the fairest of all standards, we cannot think of him as other than a scholarly and accurate thinker, with a very ingenious and by no means unpoetical mind.

Dr. Johnson forms a link between Theobald and Capell in the history of Shaksperian textual criticism. He was not equipped either mentally or physically for minute collation. Yet his treatment of the text is certainly in accordance with the synthetic method. He has restored a fair number of readings from the first Folio. Capell, with his unprecedented knowledge of all the old copies of Shakspere, was the first to point out that Johnson's edition was founded on Warburton's text.

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The public after having read Johnson's excellent proposals in 1756 must have been somewhat disappointed with his edition from a textual point of view.

As regards Johnson's opinions on the old copies, it is certainly not true, as Malone has pointed out, that Shakspere's plays were more incorrectly printed than those of any of his contemporaries. The reverse is much nearer the truth. He has also adopted Pope's conjecture that the Quartos were printed surreptitiously from separate parts written for the theatre.

i. Emendatory Criticism.

Johnson has made numerous emendations in the text, and some of them of a very minute character. Thus in *M. N. D. i.*, 1, 143, he has changed the "momentary" of the Folios to the "momentary" of the Quartos, which is the older form; and again in *Othello*, where the Quartos have:

"The senate sent *above* three guests."

He follows F_1 in reading 'hath sent about." Scarcely any of his conjectures are worth recording; none of them are brilliant though some have since been adopted.

ii. Defensive Criticism.

In defensive criticism Johnson has rendered

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good service to the textual criticism of Shakspere. He has restored many readings which Theobald had altered unnecessarily; also some of Pope's altera ions which were allowed to stand by Theobald and Warburton.

Thus in *M. N. D.*, in the speech of Egeus in the first scene, where Pope read 'witch'd," Johnson pointed out the original reading "bewitch'd."

And in the same play in the famous speech of Oberon, he restored "Cupid all armed" from the conjectured reading of Warburton, "Cupid alarmed," which seems a singularly inappropriate epithet compared with "Erōs *anikate* machan" of Sophocles.

But Johnson's chief merits as an editor of Shakspere are in the sphere of literary criticism.

iii. Edward Capell.

There are, perhaps, few greater contrasts than that between Johnson's *Preface* and that of his immediate successor, Capell. Yet it is a sure sign that Johnson did not see the supreme importance of the latter inelegant piece of writing, that he could speak of it in the depreciating way in which he did. Of the editors of Shakspere

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of the last century, Capell is certainly the most faultless. "A labour of pure love" is the justest description of his work. But the great merit of Capell's edition is that the text was founded first and foremost upon the old copies. This nearly all the editors had professed to do, but none did it but Edward Capell, and he more than did it—he did it well. Theobald, although he had a right conception of the true method of textual criticism, fell short in this particular through his animosity against Pope. Capell had no party strifes. Though he had undertaken the work as early as 1745, the world heard nothing of it till the text appeared in 1768; he adopted Cordelia's maxim, "to love and be silent," a maxim rarely indeed observed.

In his *Preface* he candidly tells the world the plan on which he proposed to work. This plan of illustrating Shakspere by acquainting oneself with the originals of his plays, and any literature that he would have been likely to read, was

Capell and Steevens.

followed out with immense labour and assiduity by Steevens, and the products of his work appeared before those of Capell's. Yet in spite

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of the assistance Steevens thus received from Capell's suggestion, he never mentions his name without contempt. Capell was undoubtedly the first to mark out the path which led to such enormous wealth of illustration.

His merits.

Every true lover of Shakspere when he comes to treat of Capell, must feel a desire to vindicate and establish his merits. The first two volumes of notes consist of notes and various readings, and an essay on his versification; and the third has a collection of black-letter literature, chiefly the originals of Shakspere's plays. It would be impossible to give any adequate idea of the labour evinced by them.

Capell's merits rest upon four facts. He was the first to *base* his text on a thorough collation of the old copies. He was the first to investigate thoroughly the merits of the Quartos and Folios, and the relations between them. He was the first to pursue in any detail the method of illustrating Shakspere, by reading books which he was likely to have known and made use of. He was the first to make a thorough investigation of Shakspere's versification.

1. Based his edition on Folios and Quartos.

2. Investigates relation of Folios and Quartos.

3. Collected illustrative literature

4. Investigates versification.

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We shall now proceed to notice these four points very briefly.

i. Quartos.

Capell came forward as a champion of the Quartos. The first thing that anyone must do who wishes to establish the authority of the Quartos is to account for the plain statement of the Editor of the first Folio, which stigmatised all other editions as "stolne and surreptitious copies." This Capell has done very cleverly and in our opinion with great probability. He remarks that although the Quartos may have been stolen copies, yet they may have been stolen from genuine copies. His statement that Shakspere had his time so filled up with the management of the theatre and with writing very copiously that he had no time for supervising, is, we think, a misconception. He had plenty of leisure time in his later years. The reason why he did not supervise them is rather that he never thought of publishing them.

He shows, as Theobald had done before him, that the Quartos have often as good a text as the Folios, sometimes better.

ii. Folios.

In his zeal to establish the genuineness of the

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text of the Quartos, he has, perhaps, underrated the value of the first Folio; as when he says, "the faults and errors of the Quartos are all preserved in the Folio, and others added to them; and what difference there is, is generally for the worse on the side of the Folio editions."

iii. Illustrative literature.

Any one who looks through his third volume of *Notes and Various Readings, &c.*, will see what labour he bestowed on this part of his task. Lastly, he made a study of Shakspere's versification, and the knowledge thus gained has enabled him to make several alterations in the arrangement of lines. Thus in *Hamlet* i., 5, 145-6,

iv. Versification.

"In faith my lord not I."

is one line in Quartos and Folios. Capell has separated them:

"In faith
My lord not I."

and has thus made two blank verses distributed between different speakers, just in Shakspere's manner.

Capell also examined very carefully the arrangement of the Acts and Scenes in such of the plays as were divided in Folios, and he has given us in very many instances the division adopted by

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modern editions.

He signified the place of each scene much more fully than Pope had done.

In conjectural criticism, though he does not often attempt it, Capell was not very happy.

It is by no means a pleasing transition from Capell to Steevens. We pass from love and refinement to haughtiness and vulgarity.

iv. George Steevens.

That Steevens was a most laborious worker cannot be denied; that he was clever is equally certain; but that he was bereft of all reverence for his author is more certain still.

But not only so—he was dishonest. Steevens undoubtedly made great use of the materials collected by Capell, but he never quotes him, he never mentions him but to insult him.

Steevens contributed greatly to the textual criticism of Shakspere by publishing twenty of the old Quartos and noting various readings.

He is at his best in explanatory notes on Shakspere's language and allusions.

As a textual critic we have to note two different stages. The edition of Quartos just noticed is a very careful piece of work. He joined Johnson

Johnson and Steevens.

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in 1773. The edition published in this year was a great improvement on Johnson's. In it Steevens is conspicuous as a defensive critic. This is the first stage. The second is seen in his own edition of 1793. In this edition he adopts quite a different method as will appear from the following statement: "We do not hesitate to affirm that a blind fidelity to the eldest printed copies is, on some occasions, a confirmed treason against the sense, spirit and versification of Shakspere." Hence, "it is time instead of a servile and timid adherence to the ancient copies, when (offending against sense and metre) they furnish no real help, that a future editor, well acquainted with the phraseology of our author's age, should be at liberty to restore some apparent meaning to his corrupted lines, and a decent flow to his obstructed versification." He thus claims an unlimited "indulgence for his private sense." He tampers with the text as much as Pope, lopping off and adding recklessly in order to produce smooth versification.

Two stages in Steevens' Textual Criticism.

It is no exaggeration to say that his edition of 1793 undid the work of many years, and departed

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altogether from the true synthetic method.

Steevens and Malone.

But Steevens was associated with Malone even still more than with Johnson. At first they worked together. Malone contributed an Essay on the Chronology of Shakspere's plays and a few notes, to the edition of 1778. But in 1780 Malone published a supplement to the edition of 1778 containing the Poems and an intimation of his intention to bring out a new edition of the poet's works. In 1785 in Reed's edition of Johnson and Steevens, Malone contributed some notes occasionally opposing the *dicta* of Steevens, whereupon the latter demanded that these notes should be printed word for word in his future edition. Malone of course would not listen to such a proposal, and a breach was made between them. And though Steevens makes great use of Malone's edition, in his own edition of 1793, he always ridicules him when he can.

Hallam's estimate of these two critics is very just: "Malone and Steevens were two laborious commentators on the meaning of words and phrases; one dull, the other clever; but the dullness was accompanied by candour and a love

of truth, the cleverness by a total absence of both."

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v. Edward Malone.

Malone's work is indeed honest if it is anything. He has undoubtedly done more than any other single man to facilitate the study and complete understanding of Shakspere.

1. Quartos.

He was quite as enthusiastic a defender of the Quartos as Capell had been, but he investigated the relations between the Folios—a task not attempted by Capell.

2. Folios.

He restored countless passages from the first Folio. He has given most convincing proof that the second Folio errs from the first by reason of the ignorance of the editor and not simply through his carelessness.

His text is certainly infinitely better than that of Steevens in 1793, and is perhaps the safest that modern editors can refer to. Modern editors owe a debt of infinite gratitude to Malone for his industry; and his edition, commonly called the Variorum Edition of 1823, re-edited by Boswell, is still in common use amongst us now. Malone will be remembered by Shaksperian scholars for his attempt to form the Chronological Order of Shakspere's plays, and for his refutation of the

His attempt to form Chronological Order.

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Ireland Forgeries, which have not to be considered here.

More a Compiler than a Critic

His edition is of course chiefly a compilation, a monument of industry.

The following remarks on the Variorum Edition are from an excellent critic:[1]

"We can nowhere point to such an accumulated mass of industry, which is at the same time such a mass of rubbish. It is impossible to conceive a greater amount of stupidity drivelling, pedantry, senseless learning collected into one work. Note upon note, blunder upon blunder, conjecture upon conjecture, drivel upon drivel, without order, without method wearisome, tantalizing and profitless." We can indeed well imagine that Malone's edition might appear in this light to the logical mind of G. H. Lewes; but yet this is a singularly ungrateful tribute for so much industry, and it is far enough from the truth. Malone has seldom indulged in conjecture, and when he does he is never happy. Yet he has defended the text most faithfully; and though it may be much to be brilliant and clever, yet brilliance without industry

His amazing industry

1 Lewes in *Westminster Review* xliii.

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is worth little, and cleverness without honesty is worth less. If that celebrated author is right who defines genius to be "a transcendent capacity of taking trouble," Malone most certainly must be classed as a wonderful example of this genius.

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Walder, Ernest.
Shaksperian criticism: textual and literary, from Dryden to the end of the eighteenth ...